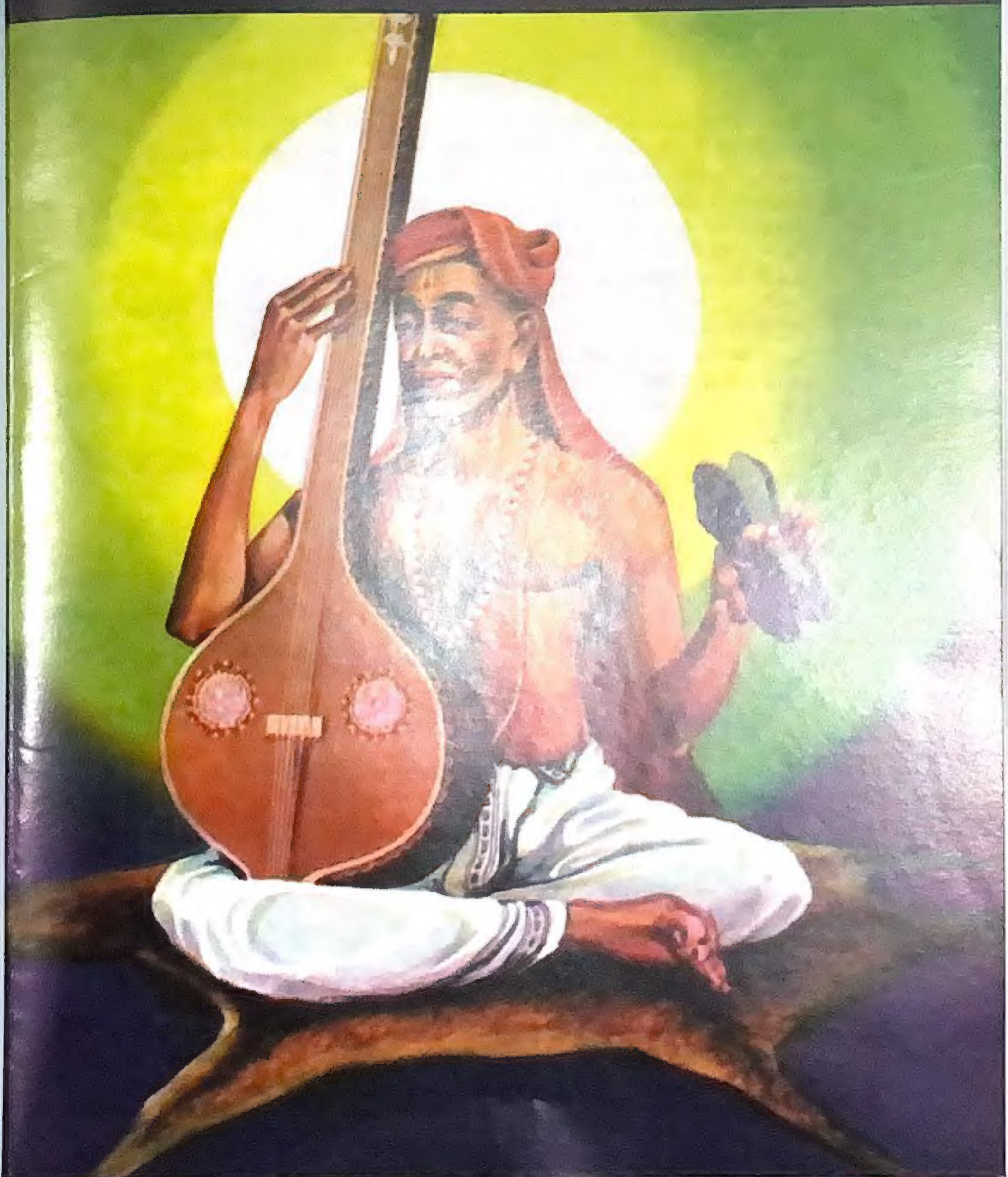


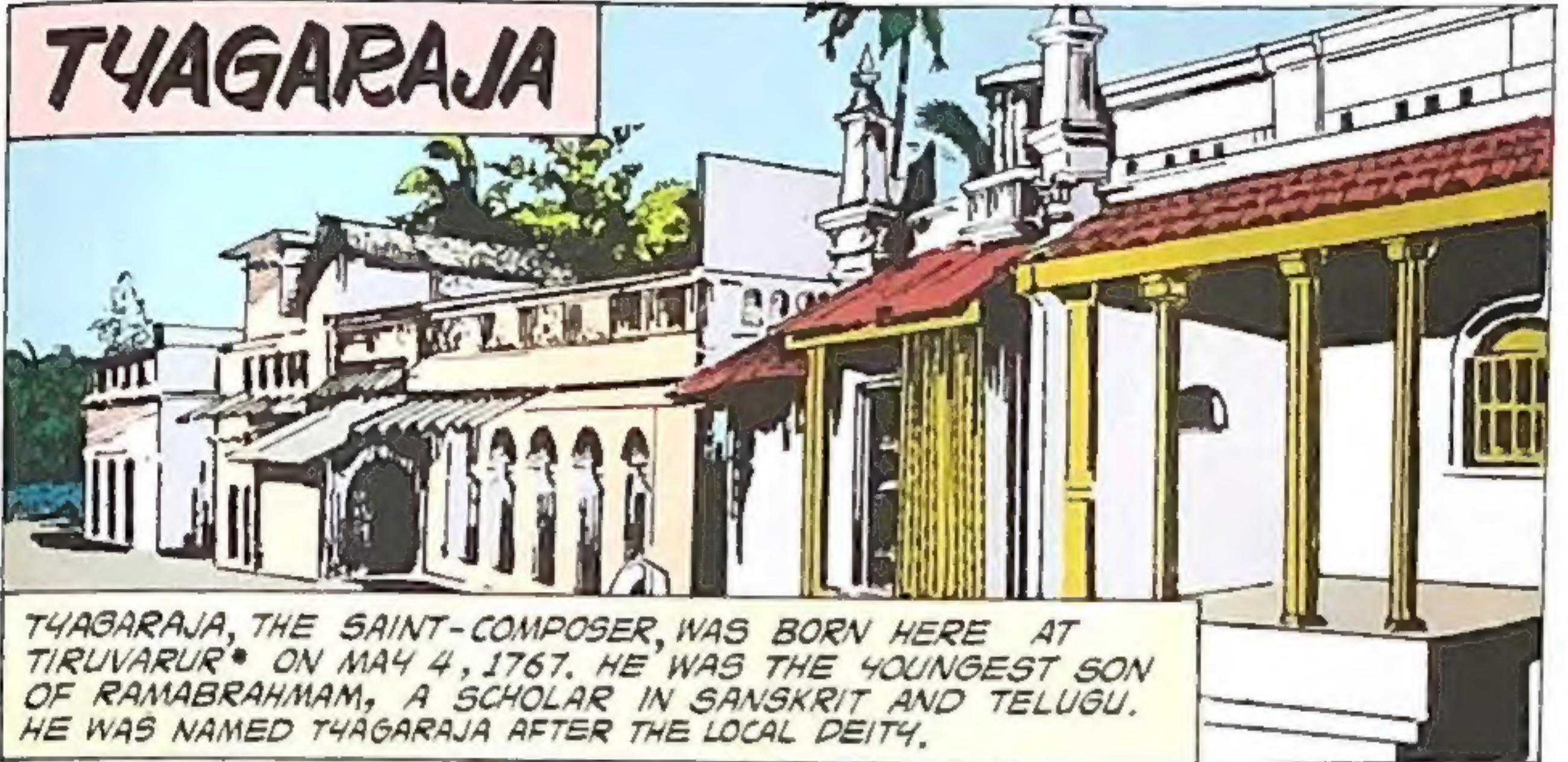


TYAGARAJA

POET-SAINT AND SOCIAL ACTIVIST



TYAGARAJA

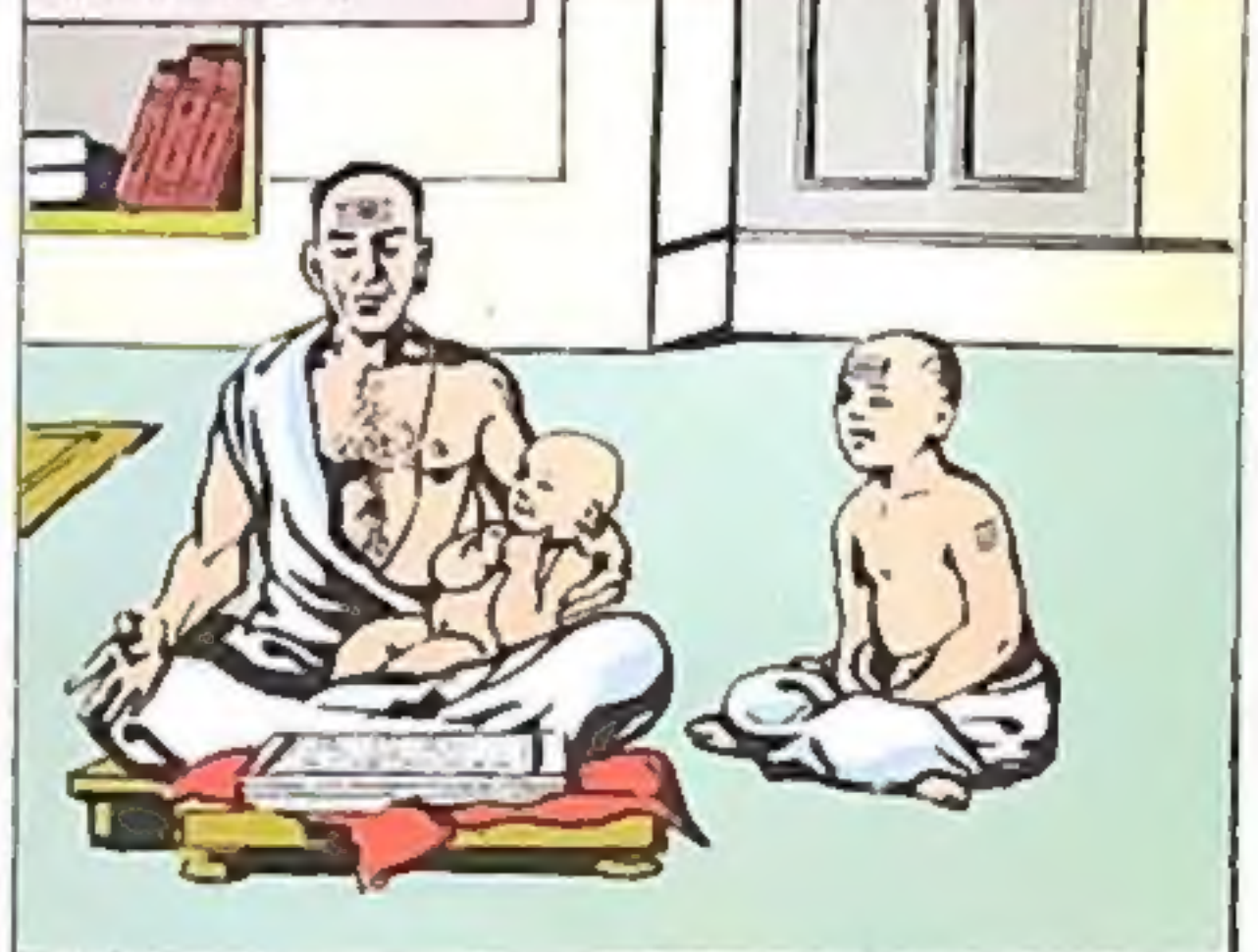


TYAGARAJA, THE SAINT-COMPOSER, WAS BORN HERE AT TIRUVARUR* ON MAY 4, 1767. HE WAS THE YOUNGEST SON OF RAMABRAHMAM, A SCHOLAR IN SANSKRIT AND TELUGU. HE WAS NAMED TYAGARAJA AFTER THE LOCAL DEITY.

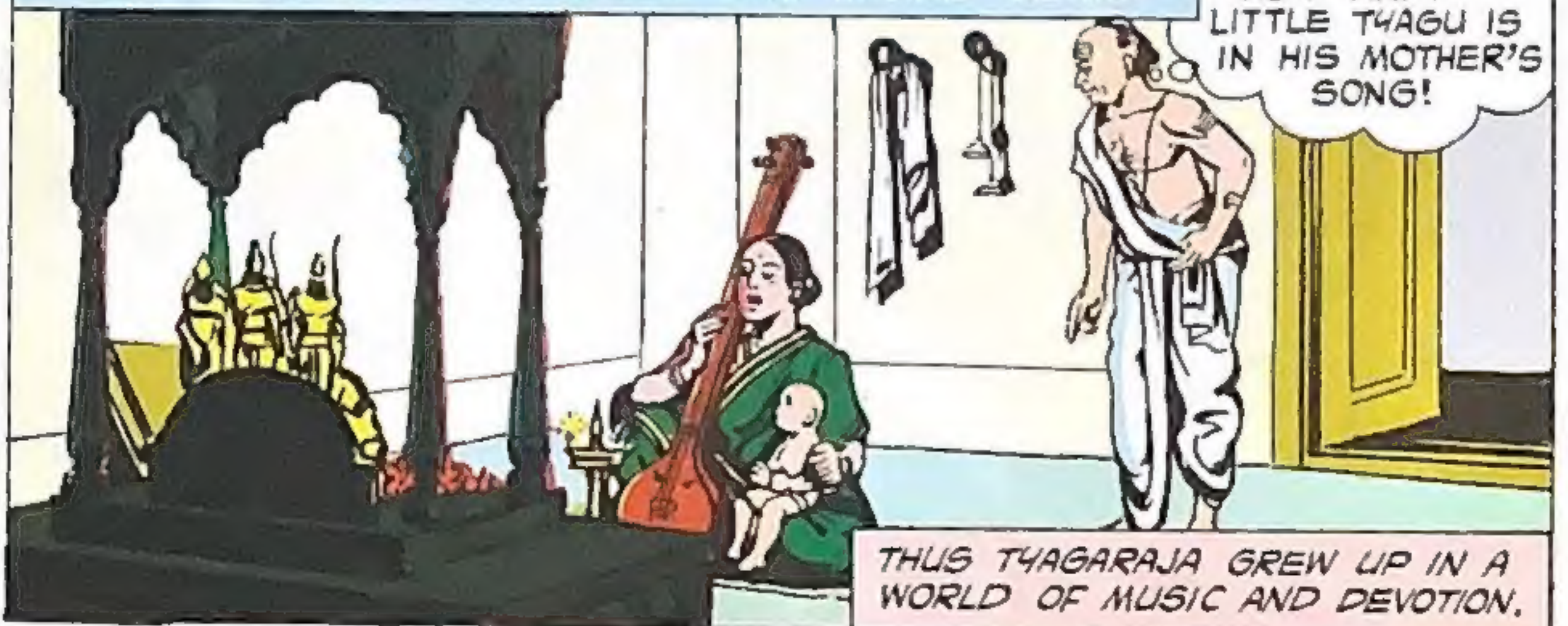
RAMABRAHMAM AND HIS WIFE SEETAMMA WERE STAUNCH DEVOTEES OF RAMA.



EVERY EVENING RAMABRAHMAM WOULD READ VERSES FROM THE RAMAYANA...



...AND LATER SEETAMMA WOULD SING SACRED SONGS.



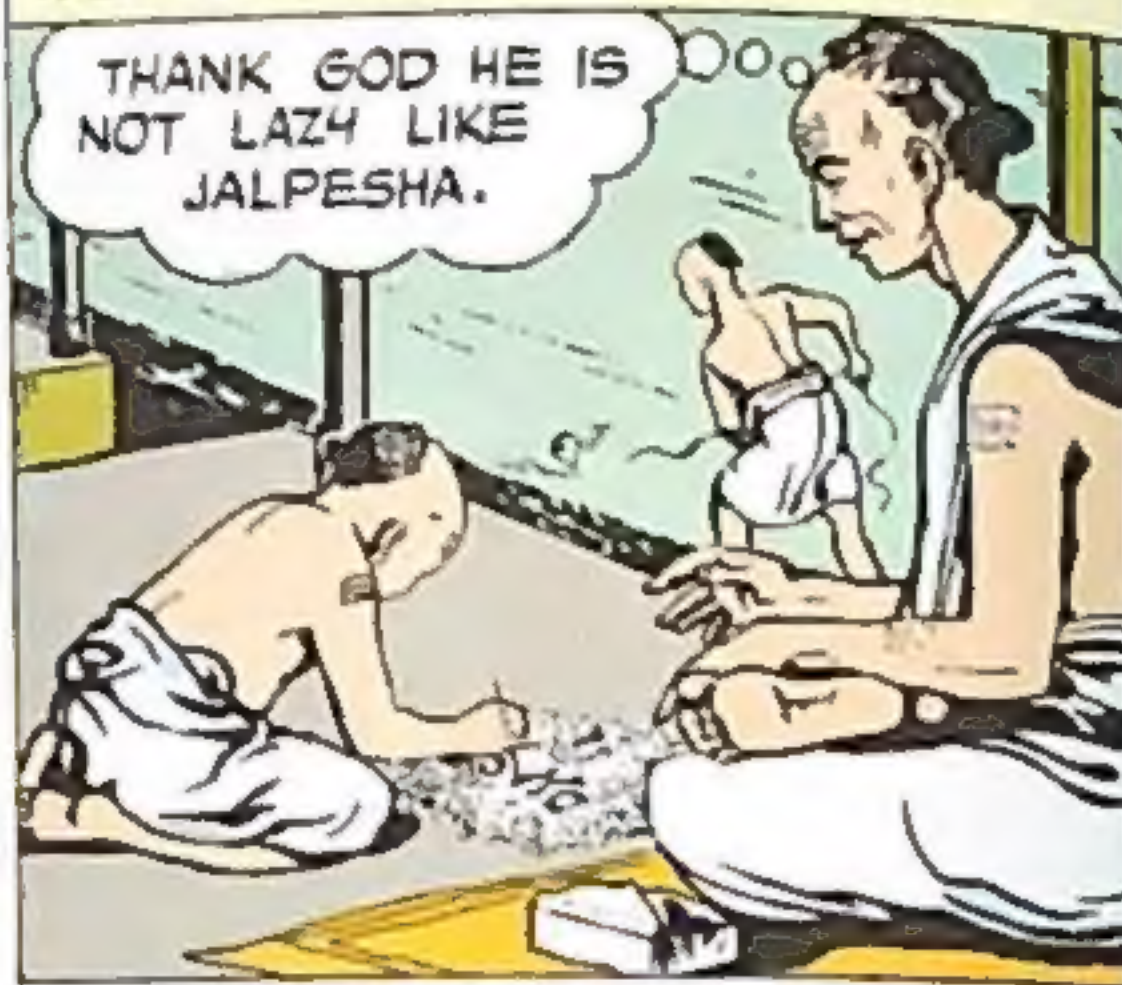
THUS TYAGARAJA GREW UP IN A WORLD OF MUSIC AND DEVOTION.

* A TOWN IN TAMIL NADU

A FEW YEARS LATER AT THE INVITATION OF RAJA TULAJAJI III, RAMABRAHMAN SETTLED DOWN AT THE VILLAGE OF THIRUVAIYARU.



RAMABRAHMAN HIMSELF TAUGHT TYAGARAJA TELUGU AND SANSKRIT. THE LESSONS BEGAN AT DAWN.



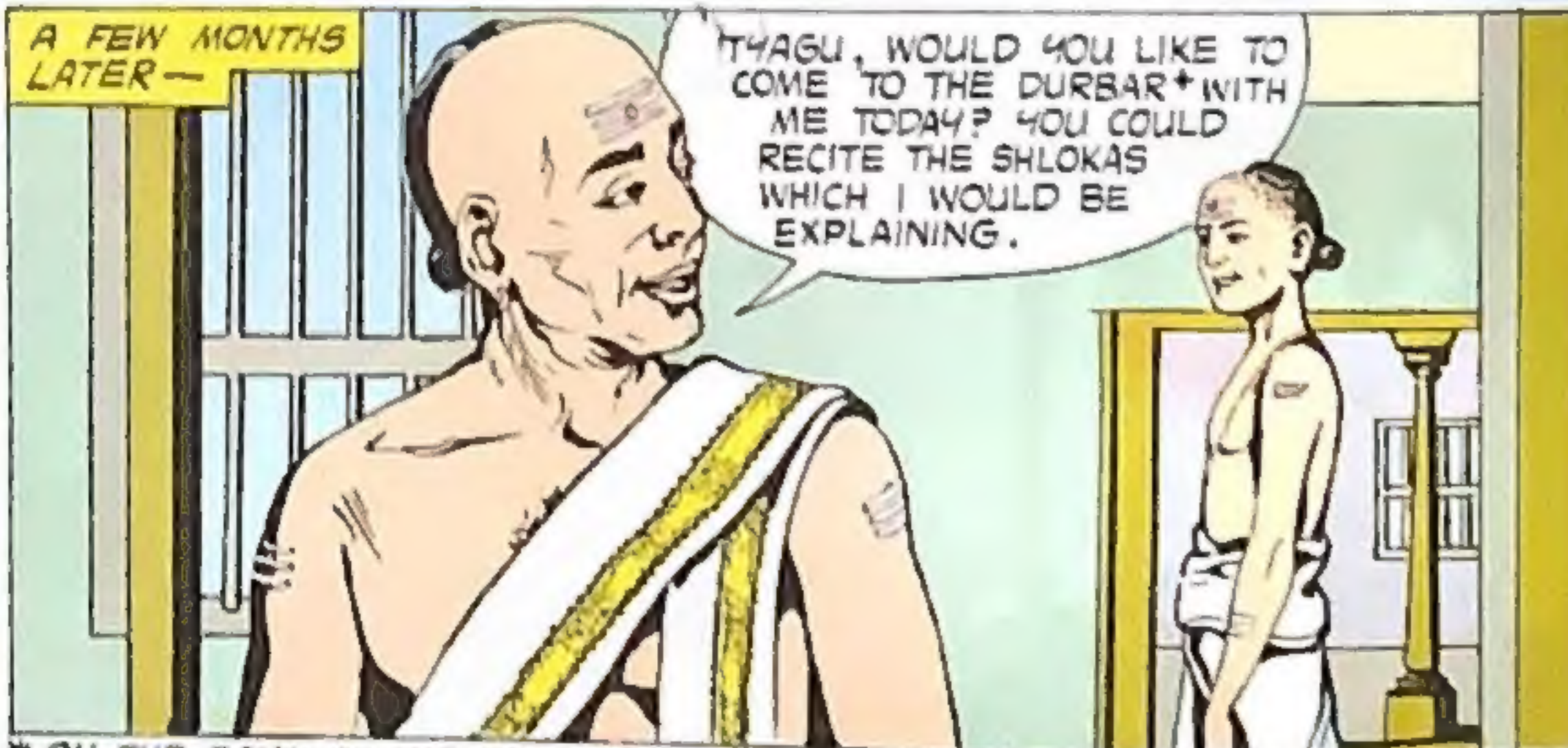
THANK GOD HE IS NOT LAZY LIKE JALPESHA.

WHEN THE LESSONS PROGRESSED TO LEARNING AND RECITING SHLOKAS FROM THE RAMAYANA—



HIS MEMORY! HIS DICTION! AMAZING! HE WILL SOON BE ABLE TO HELP ME IN MY DISCOURSES.

A FEW MONTHS LATER—



TYAGU, WOULD YOU LIKE TO COME TO THE DURBAR WITH ME TODAY? YOU COULD RECITE THE SHLOKAS WHICH I WOULD BE EXPLAINING.

THAT EVENING AS TYAGARAJA RECITED THE SHLOKAS—



AHA! LISTEN! THAT BOY WILL BE A GOOD SINGER SOME DAY!

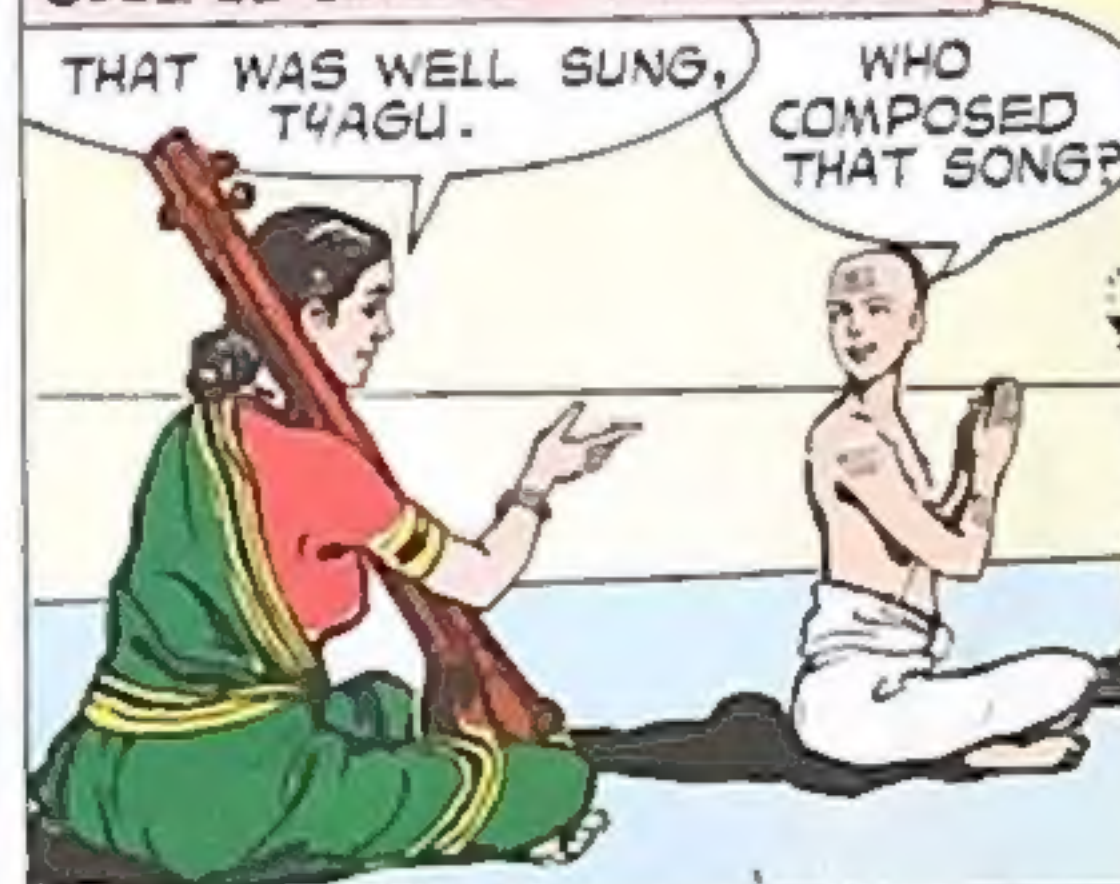
SUCH A CLEAR VOICE! AND SUCH PURITY OF DICTION! A MARVEL INDEED!

AT HOME TYAGARAJA HAD BEGUN SINGING WITH HIS MOTHER.



LAMBODARA... LAKUMIKARA...

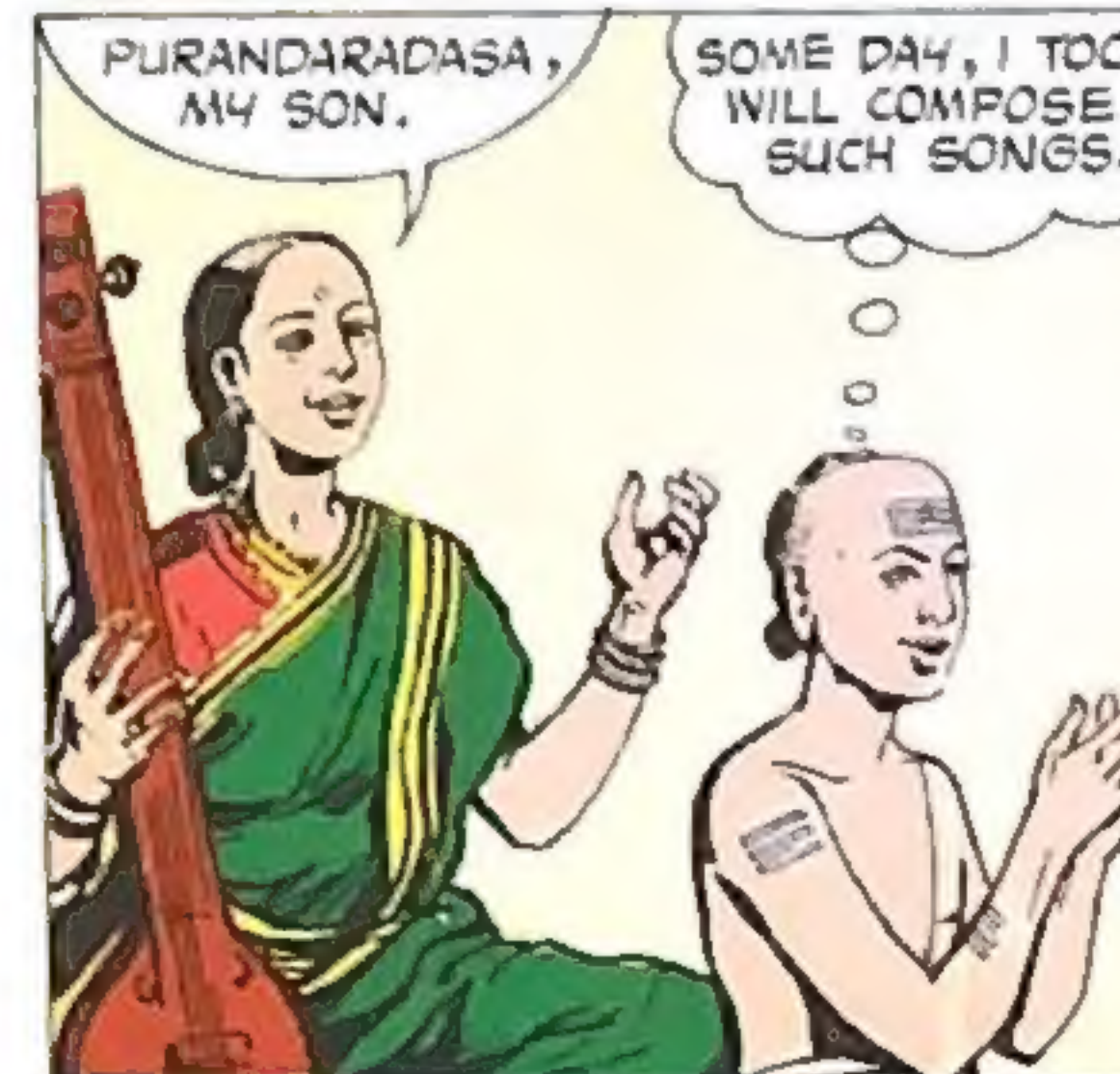
SEETAMMA THRILLED TO THE SOULFUL SINGING OF HER SON.



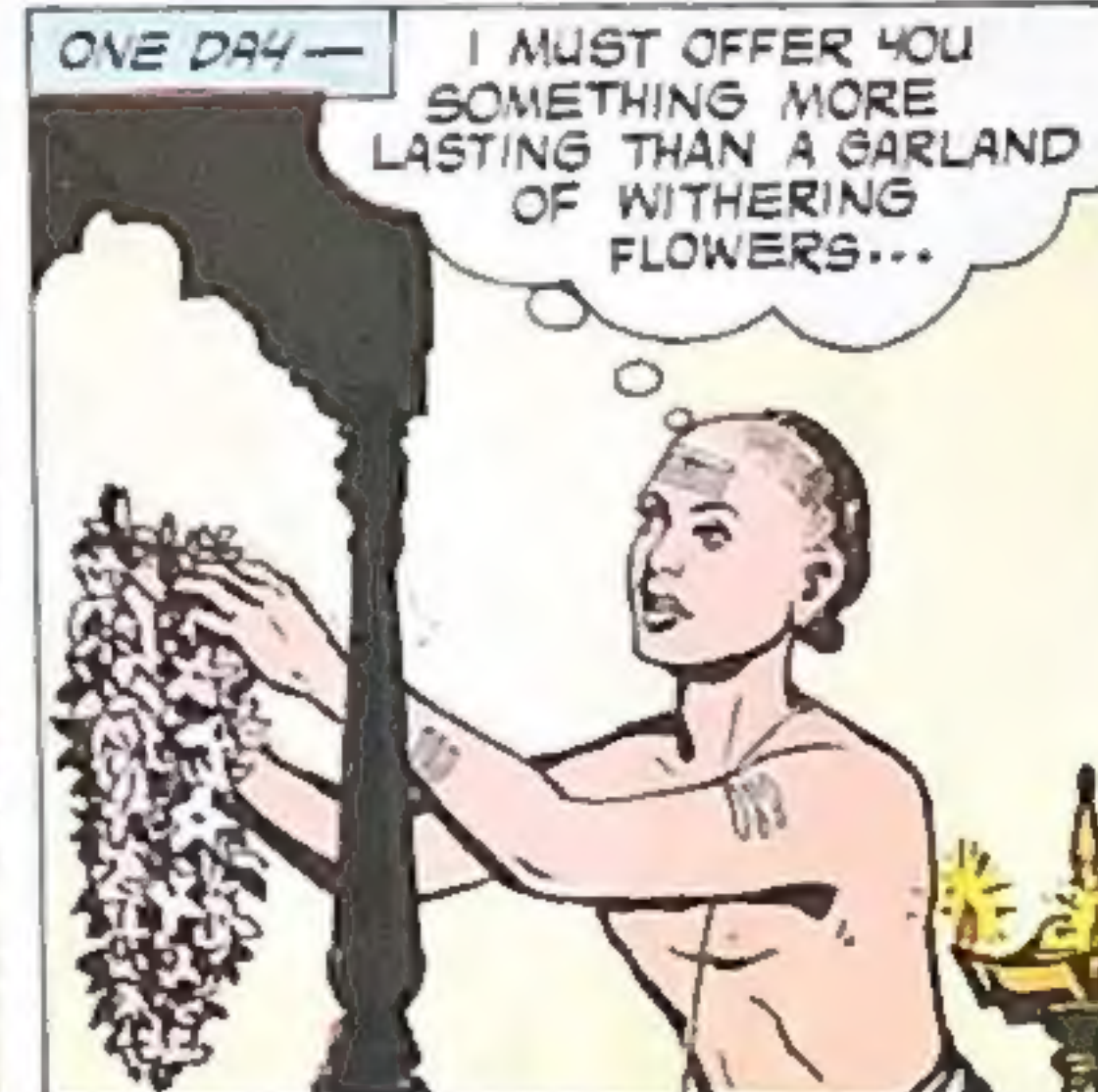
THAT WAS WELL SUNG, TYAGU.

WHO COMPOSED THAT SONG?

PURANDARADASA, MY SON.



SOME DAY, I TOO WILL COMPOSE SUCH SONGS.



ONE DAY—

I MUST OFFER YOU SOMETHING MORE LASTING THAN A GARLAND OF WITHERING FLOWERS...



AND TYAGARAJA BURST INTO SONG.

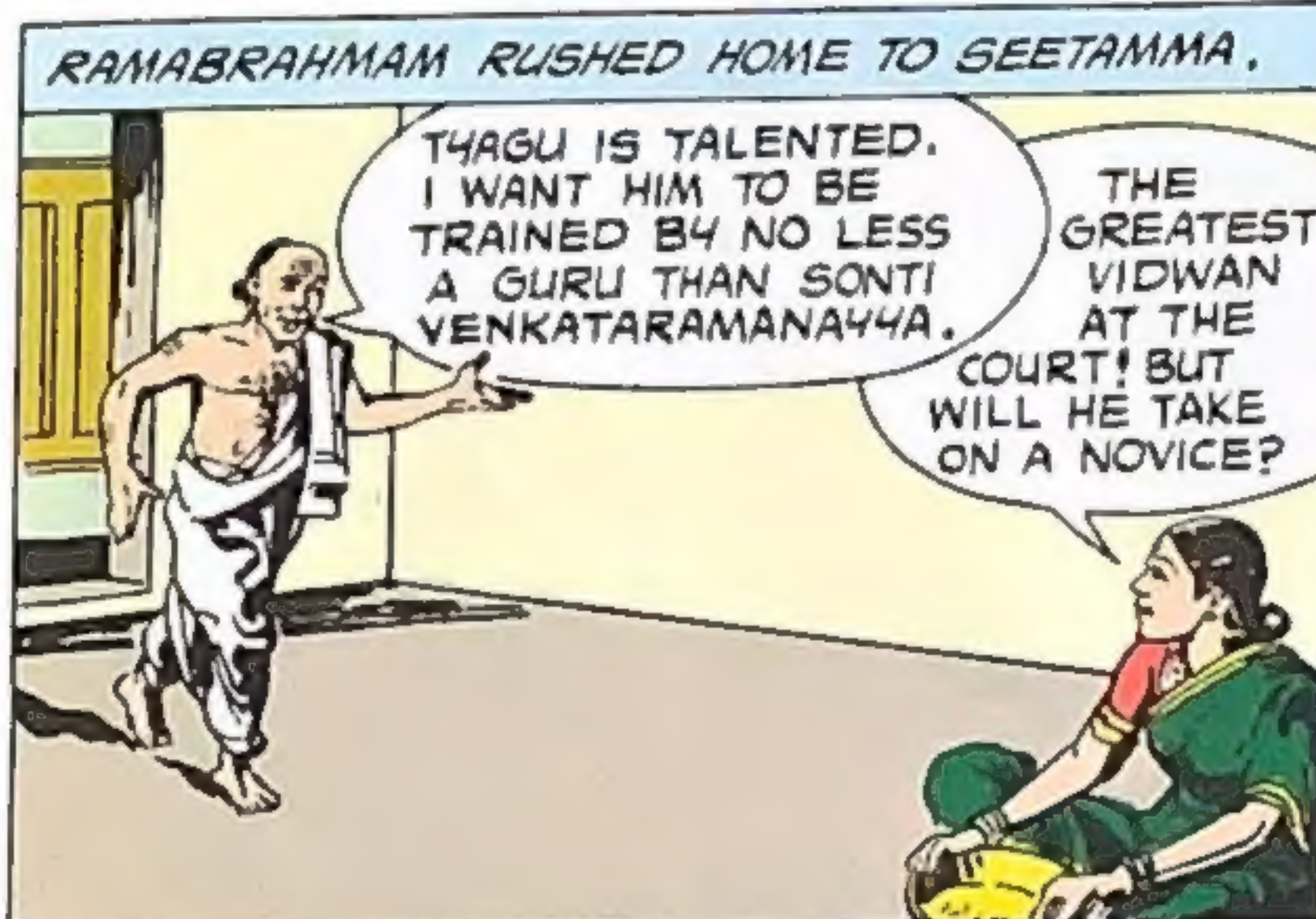


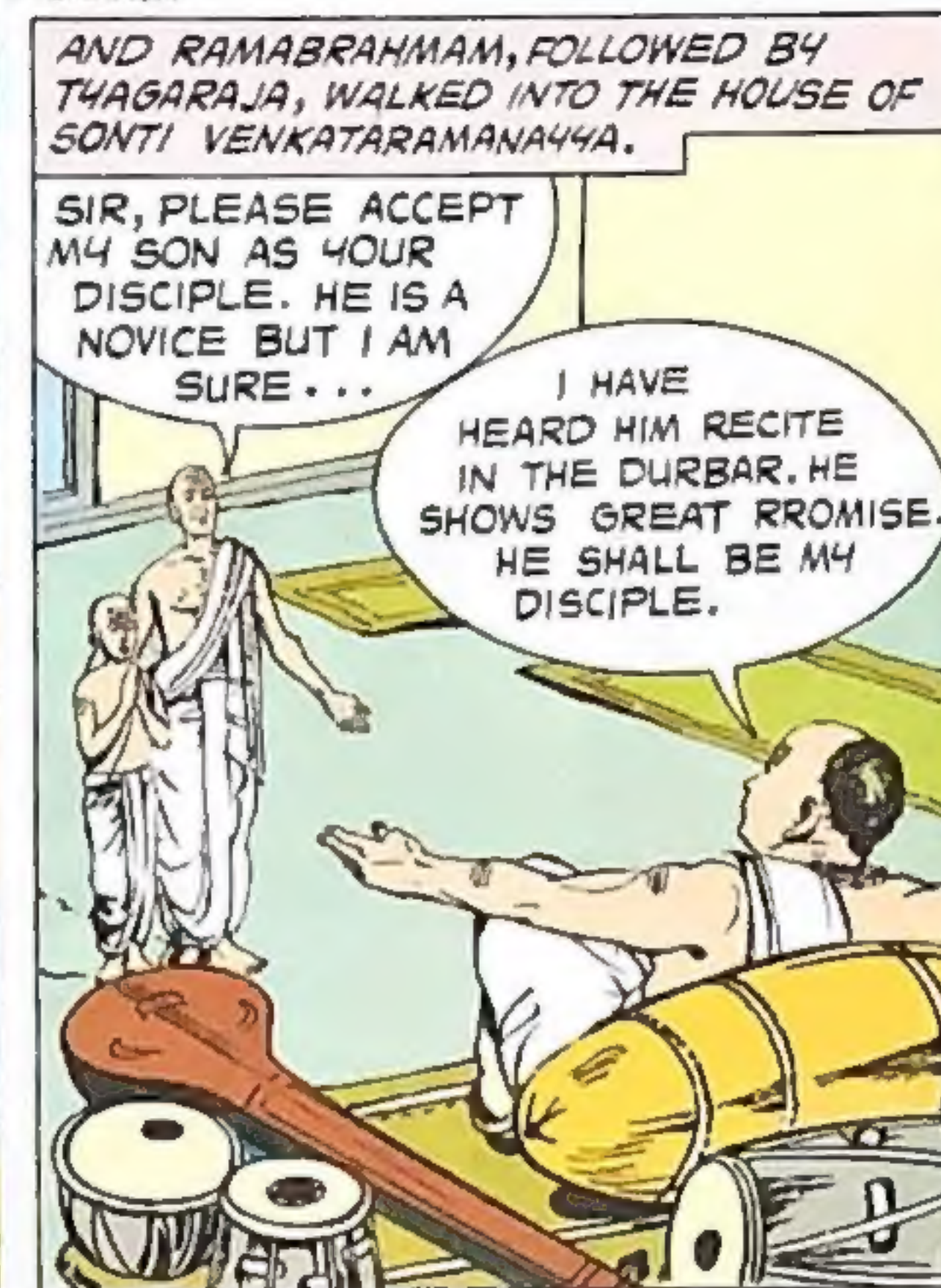
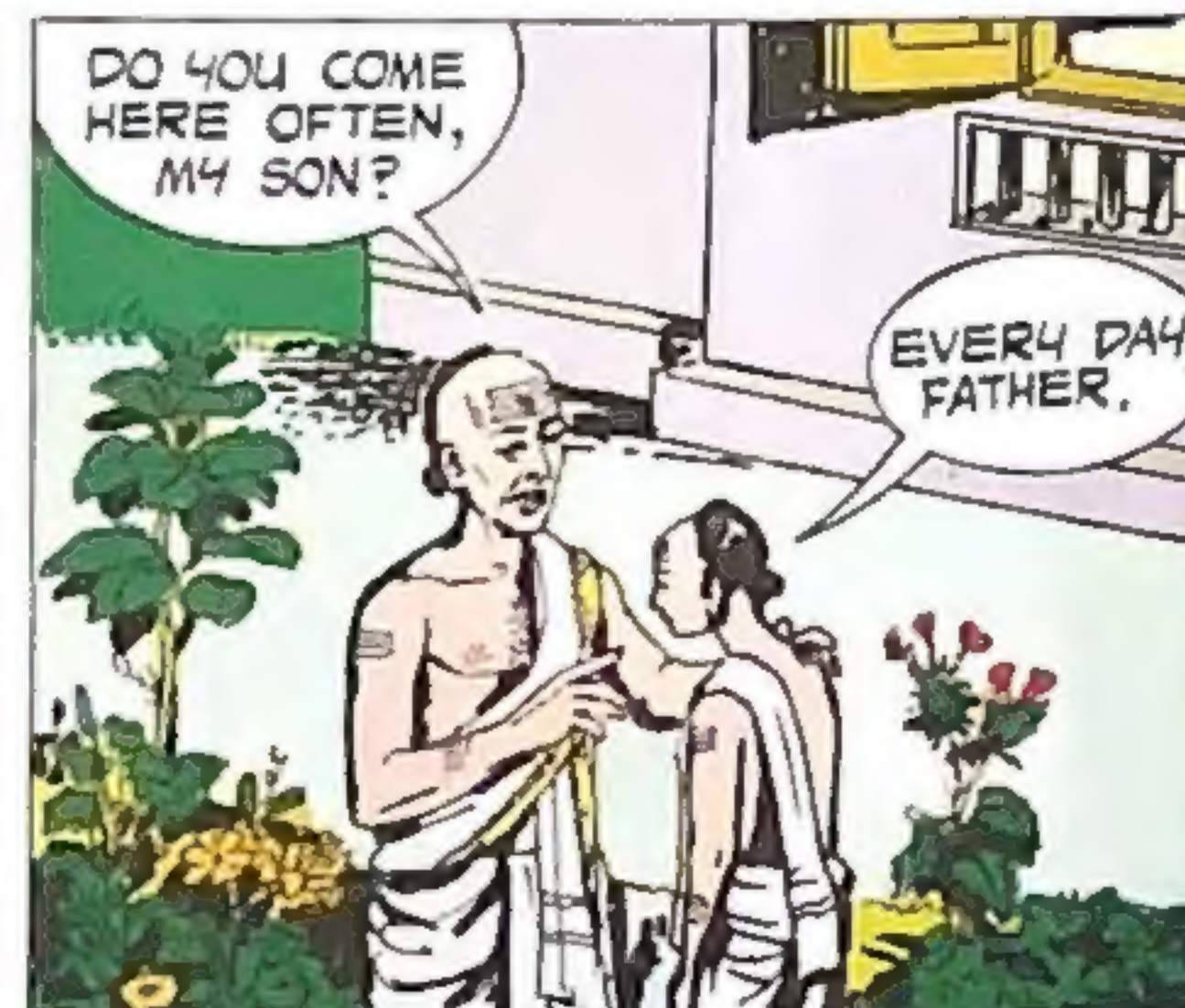
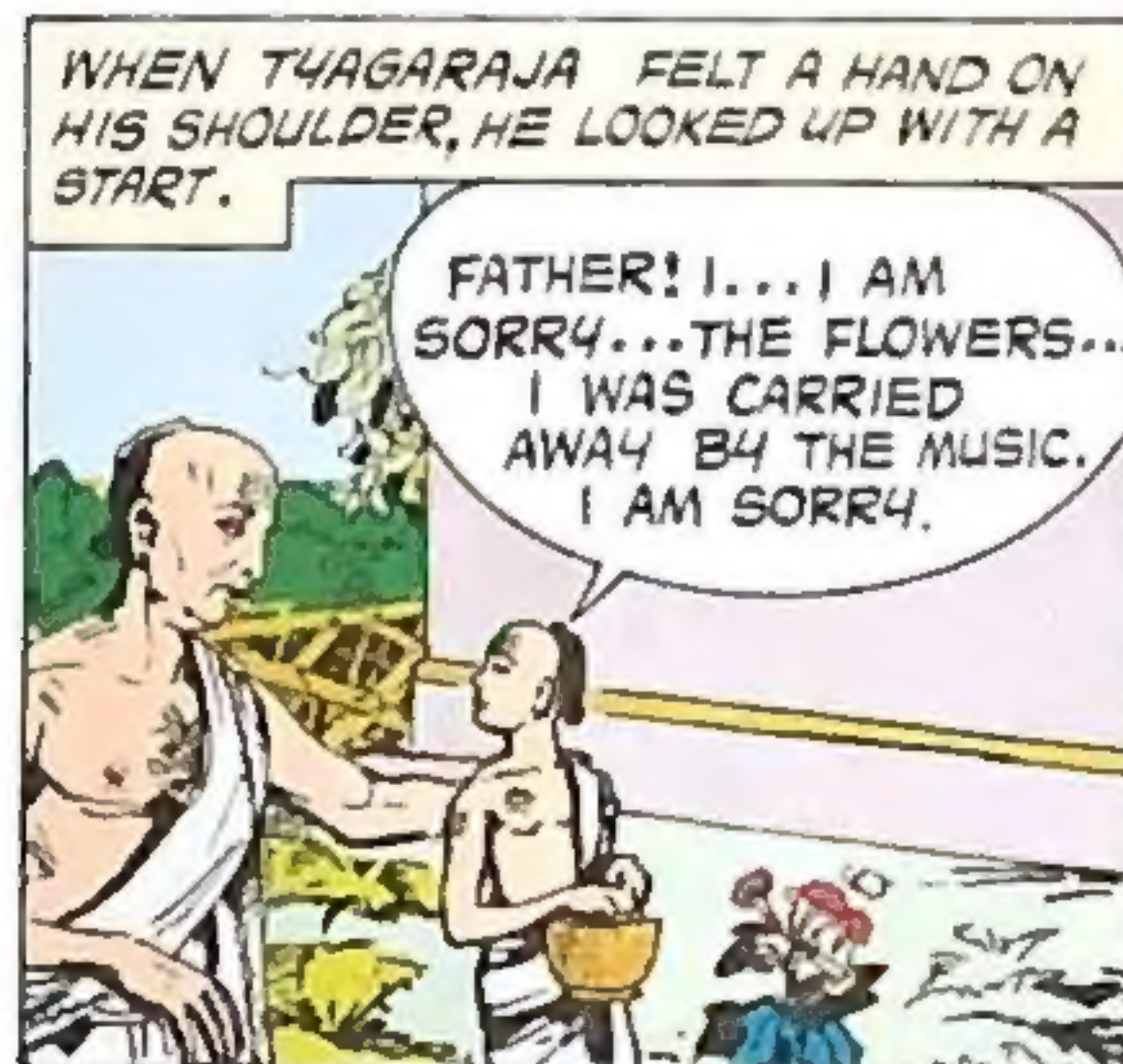
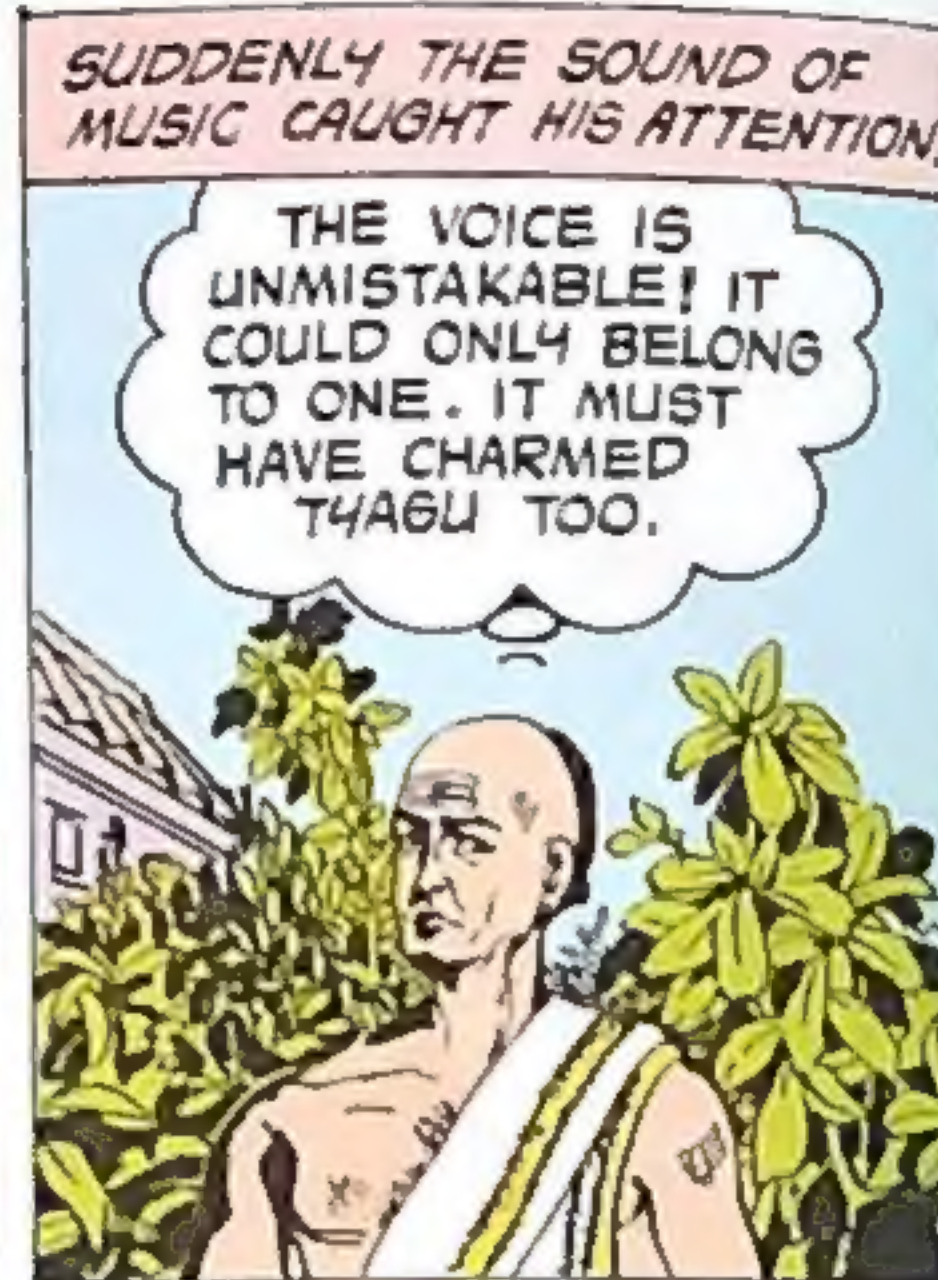
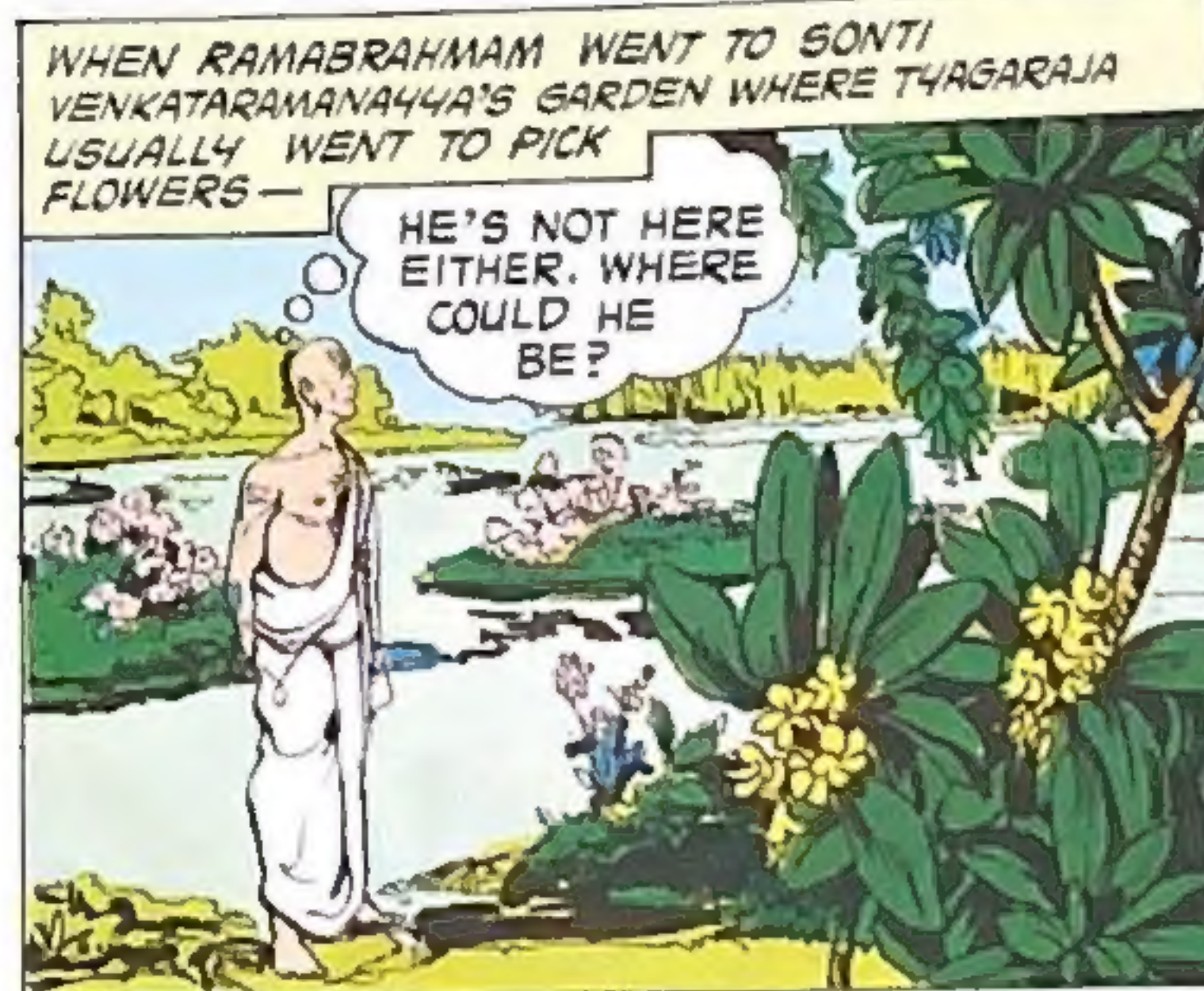
* SAID TO BE HIS EARLIEST COMPOSITION

HE COULD SCARCELY CONCEAL HIS JOY AND PRIDE.



THE REACTION OF THE MUSICIANS WAS ENCOURAGING.

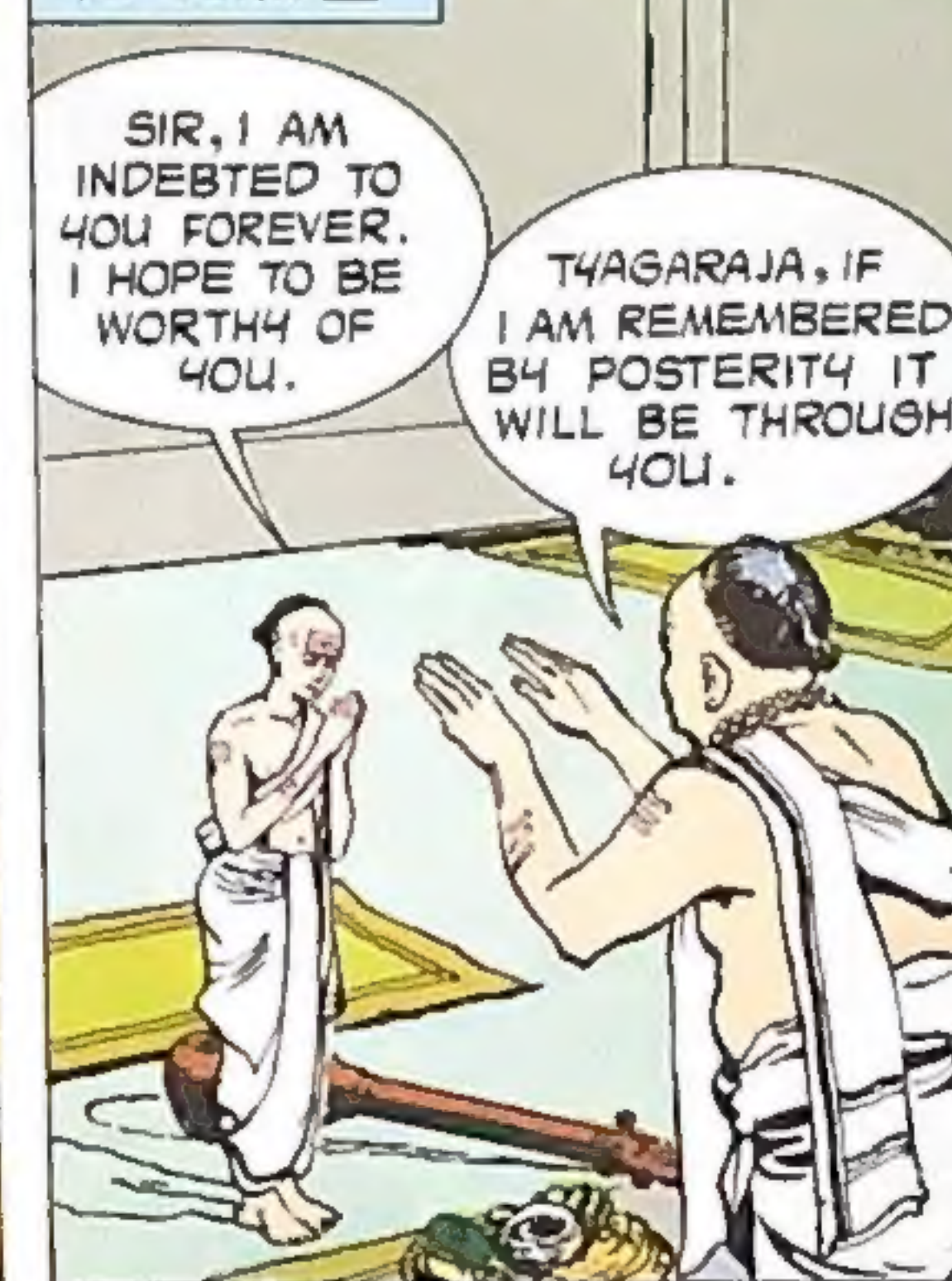




STAYING WITH THE GURU, AS WAS THE CUSTOM IN THOSE DAYS, TYAGARAJA BEGAN HIS LESSONS.



IT TOOK TYAGARAJA BUT ONE YEAR TO LEARN ALL THAT SONTI COULD TEACH HIM. AS HE TOOK LEAVE OF HIS GURU —



THE FOLLOWING YEAR, TYAGARAJA WHO WAS NOW SEVENTEEN YEARS OLD, WAS MARRIED TO PARVATI*.



BUT MUSIC CONTINUED TO BE HIS FIRST LOVE. MANY DOUBTS IN MUSICOLOGY BEGAN TO WORRY HIM.

TO WHOM CAN I TURN? WHO IS THERE WHO WILL GUIDE ME?



THEN ONE MORNING, A SANYASI CAME TO HIS HOUSE.



I HAVE HEARD OF YOU. SING FOR ME.

I BOW TO SHANKARA THE EMBODIMENT OF NADA... TO HIM WHO DELIGHTS IN THE SEVEN SVARAS, SA-RI-GA-MA-PA-DHA-NI, I BOW.



WHEN THE SONG WAS OVER —

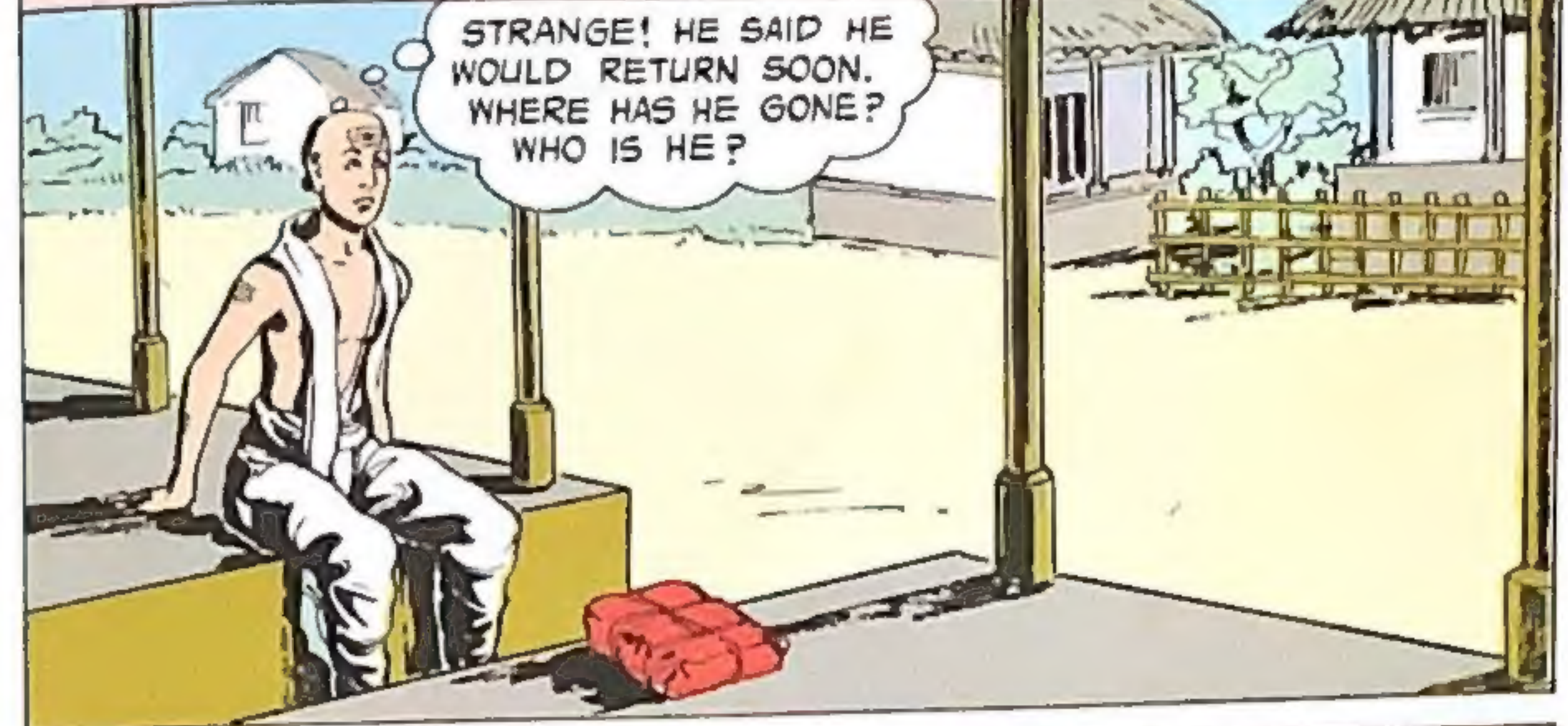
I AM LEAVING THIS BUNDLE HERE. I WILL RETURN FOR BHIKSHA AFTER A BATH IN THE RIVER.

I WILL WAIT FOR YOU, HOLY ONE.



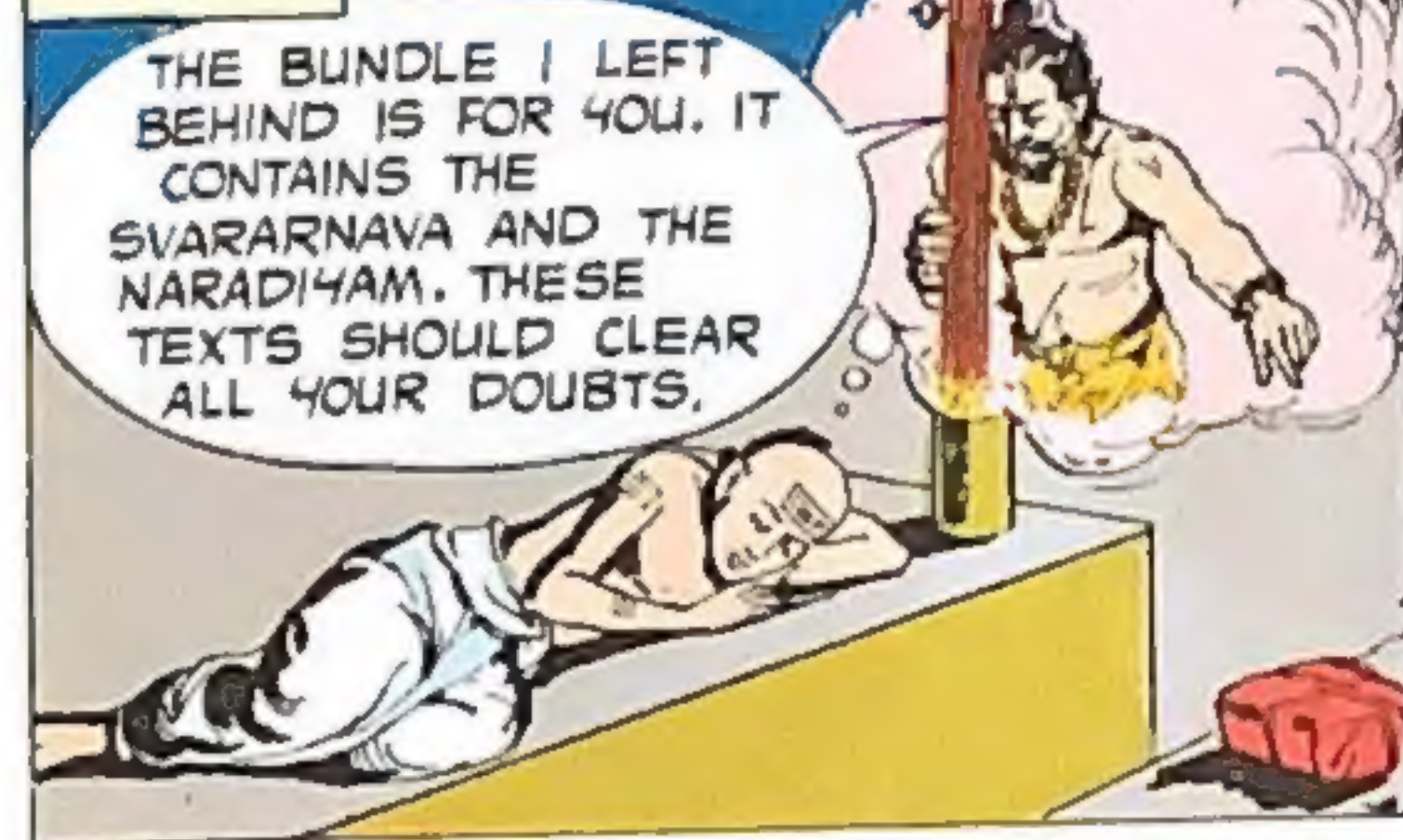
* FIVE YEARS LATER, WHEN PARVATI DIED, HE MARRIED HER SISTER, DHARMAMBA.

TYAGARAJA KEPT WATCH AND WAITED FOR HIM AS THE HOURS WENT BY.



STRANGE! HE SAID HE WOULD RETURN SOON. WHERE HAS HE GONE? WHO IS HE?

NIGHT FELL, BUT THERE WAS NO SIGN OF THE SAGE. TIRED AND HUNGRY, TYAGARAJA FELL ASLEEP.



THE BUNDLE I LEFT BEHIND IS FOR YOU. IT CONTAINS THE SVARARNAVA AND THE NARADIYAM. THESE TEXTS SHOULD CLEAR ALL YOUR DOUBTS.

TYAGARAJA SAT UP WITH A START.

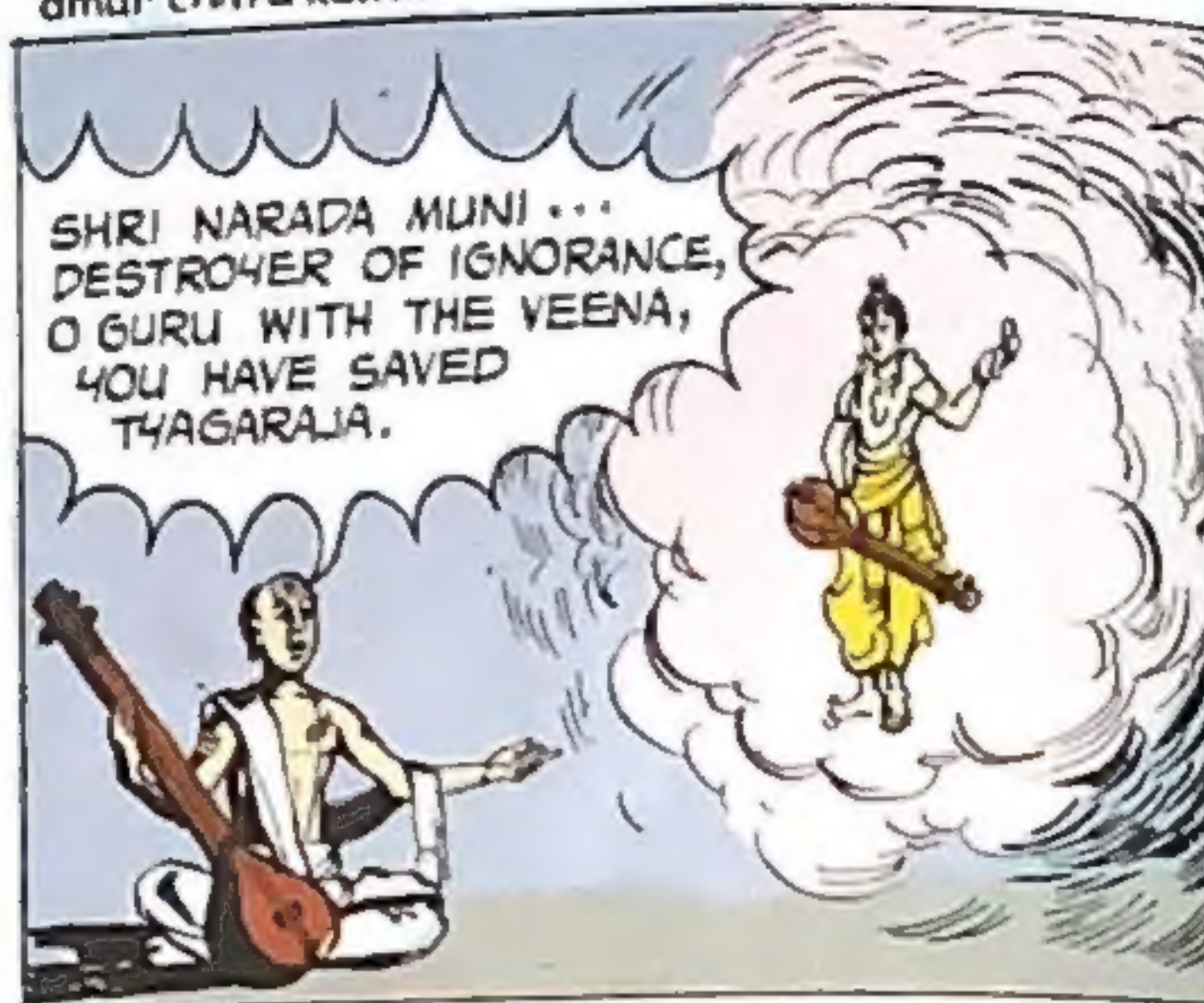
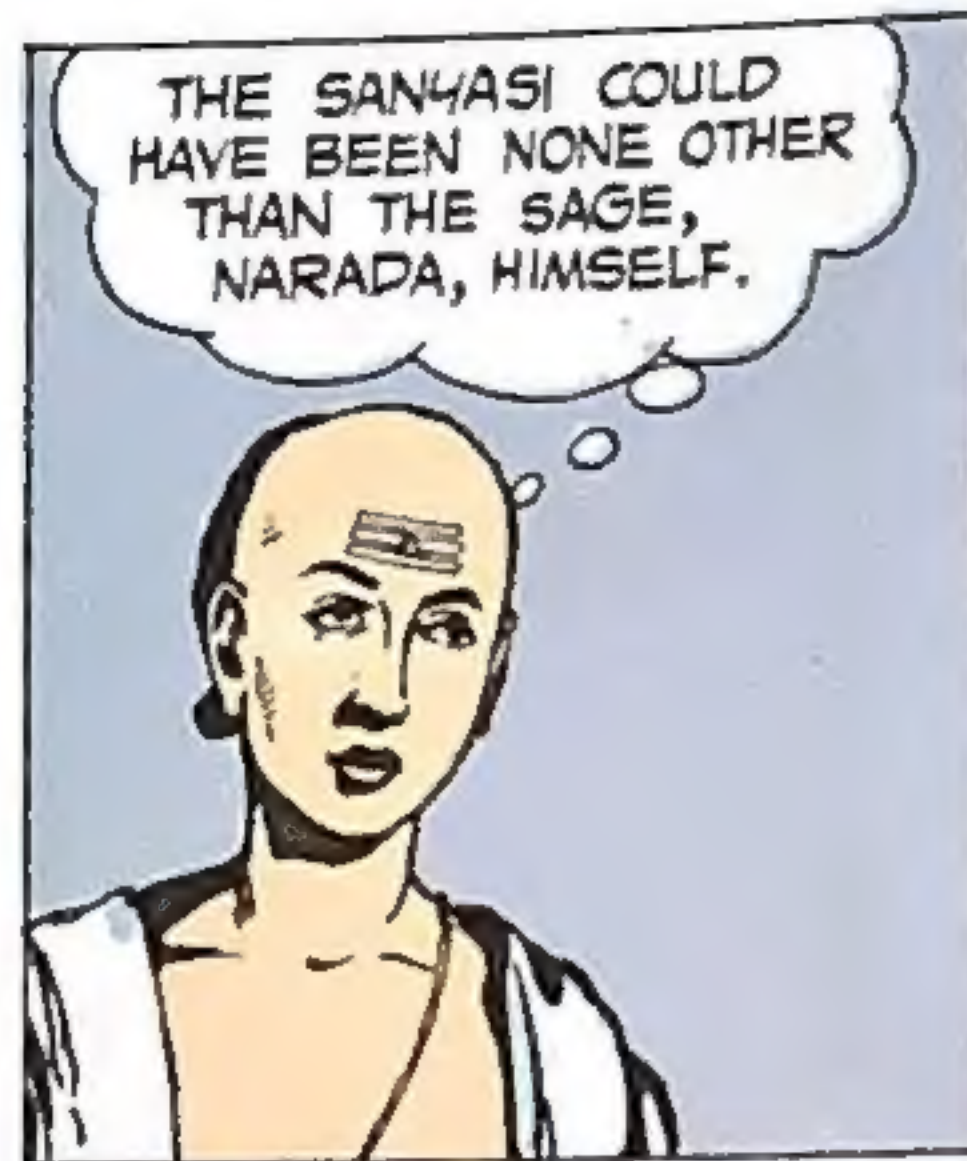
WAS HE HERE? OR WAS IT A DREAM?



HE HURRIEDLY OPENED THE BUNDLE.



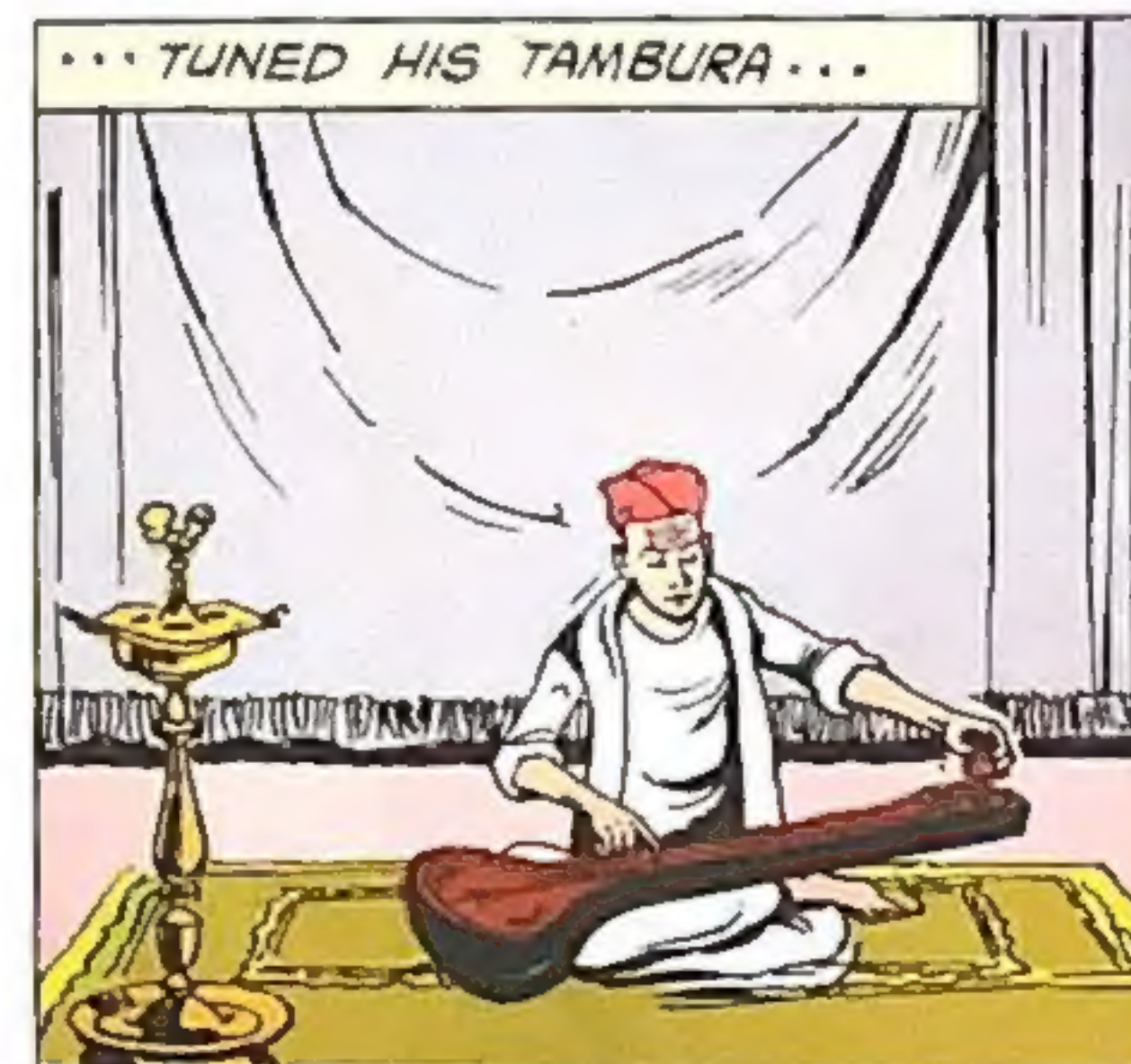
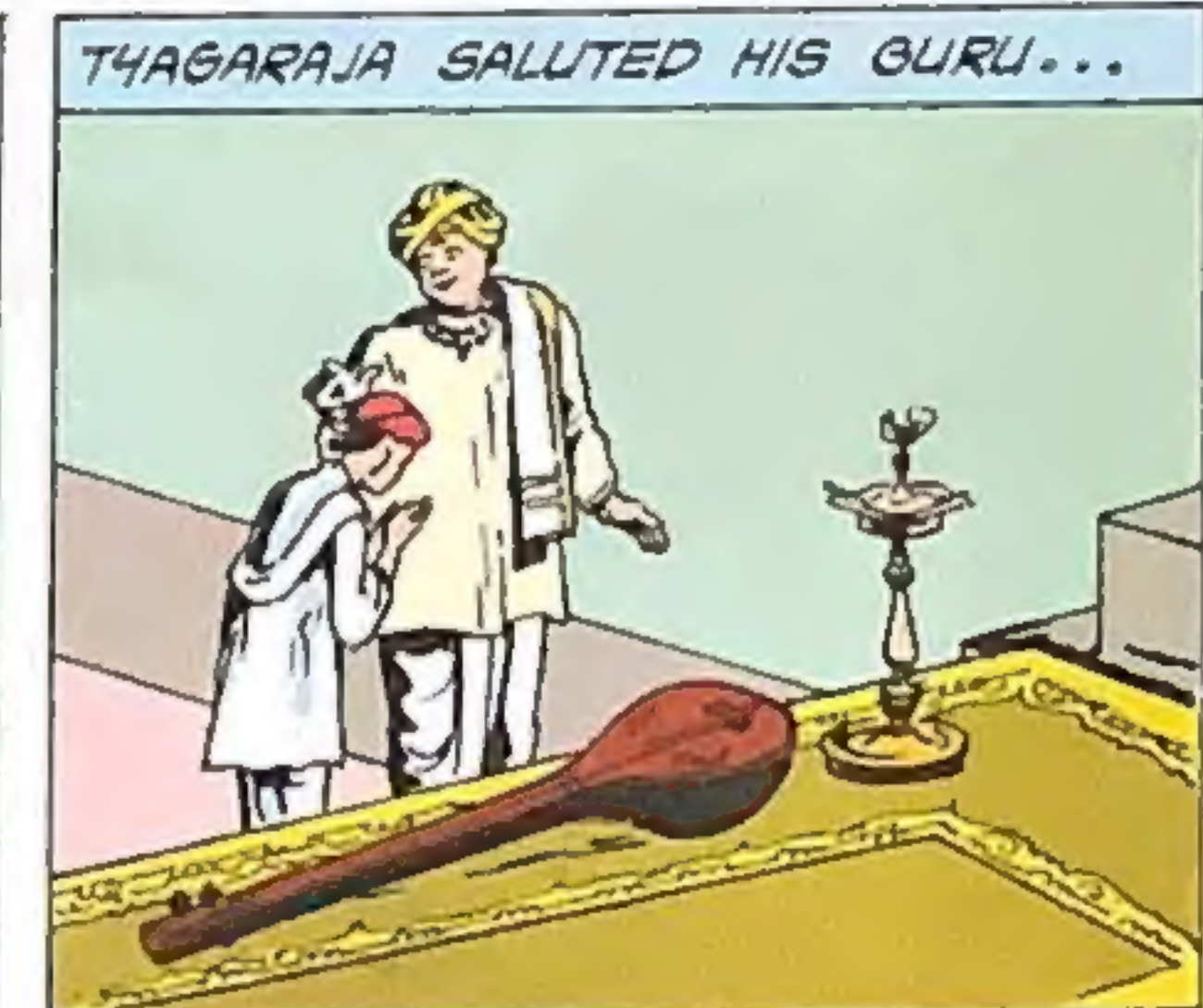
WELL, IT WAS NO EMPTY DREAM. HERE ARE THOSE FAMOUS TEXTS ON MUSIC!

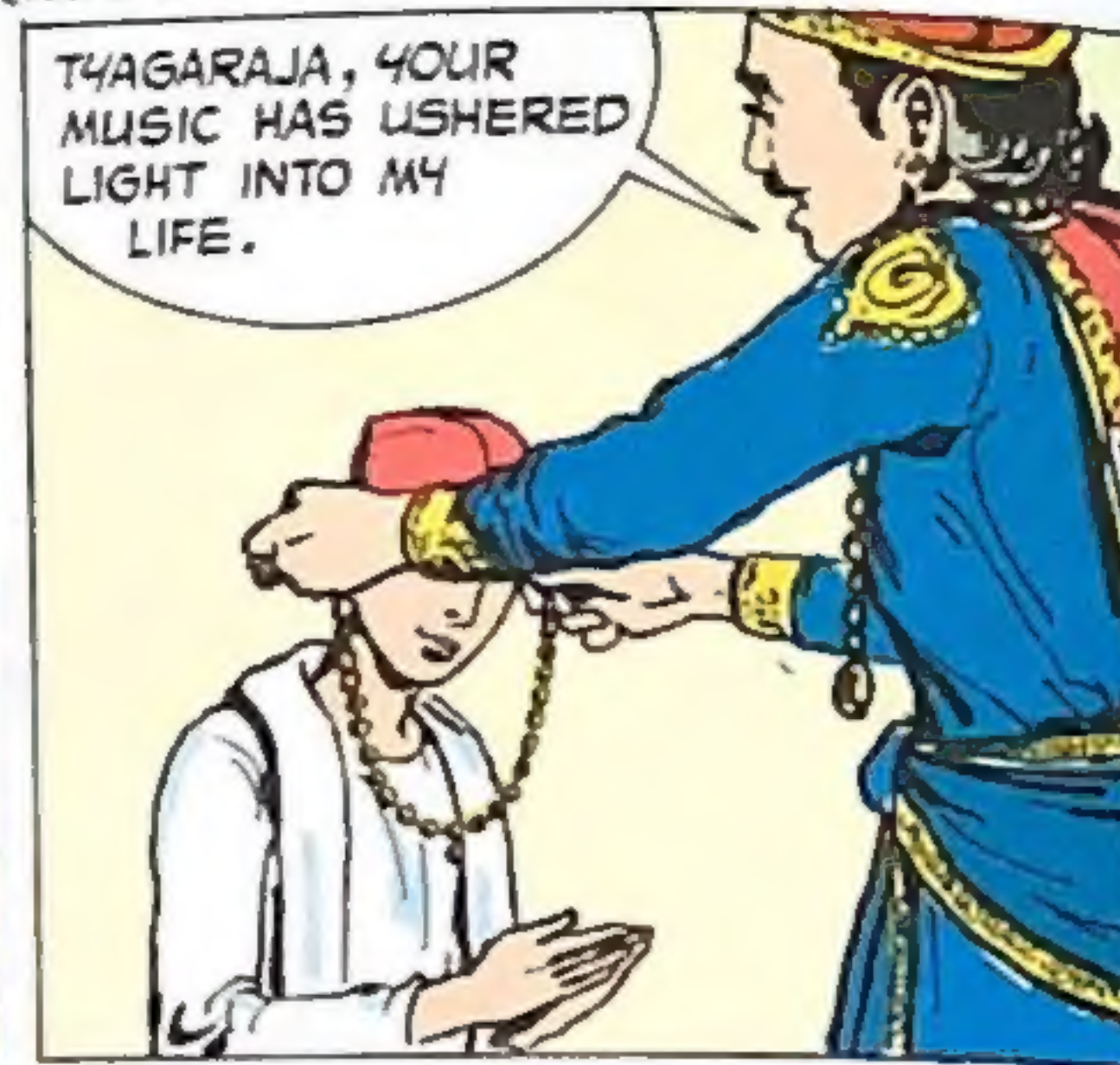
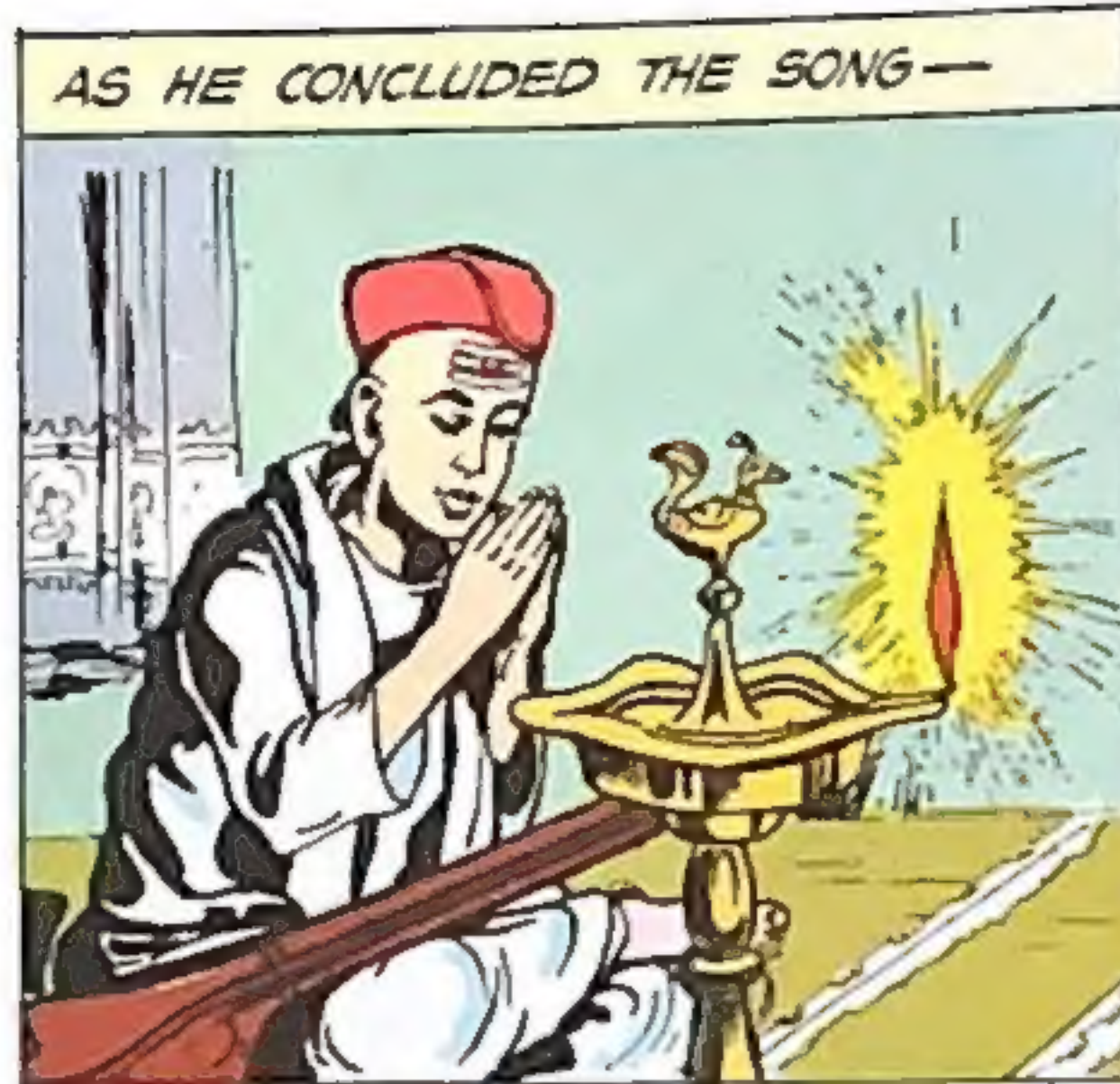


TYAGARAJA PORED OVER THE TEXTS NIGHT AND DAY TILL HE HAD MASTERED THEM. HE WAS IN ECSTASY.



HE SOON PROVED THAT IN AN ASSEMBLY OF MUSICIANS AT THE PALACE OF THE RAJA OF PUDUKOTTAI.





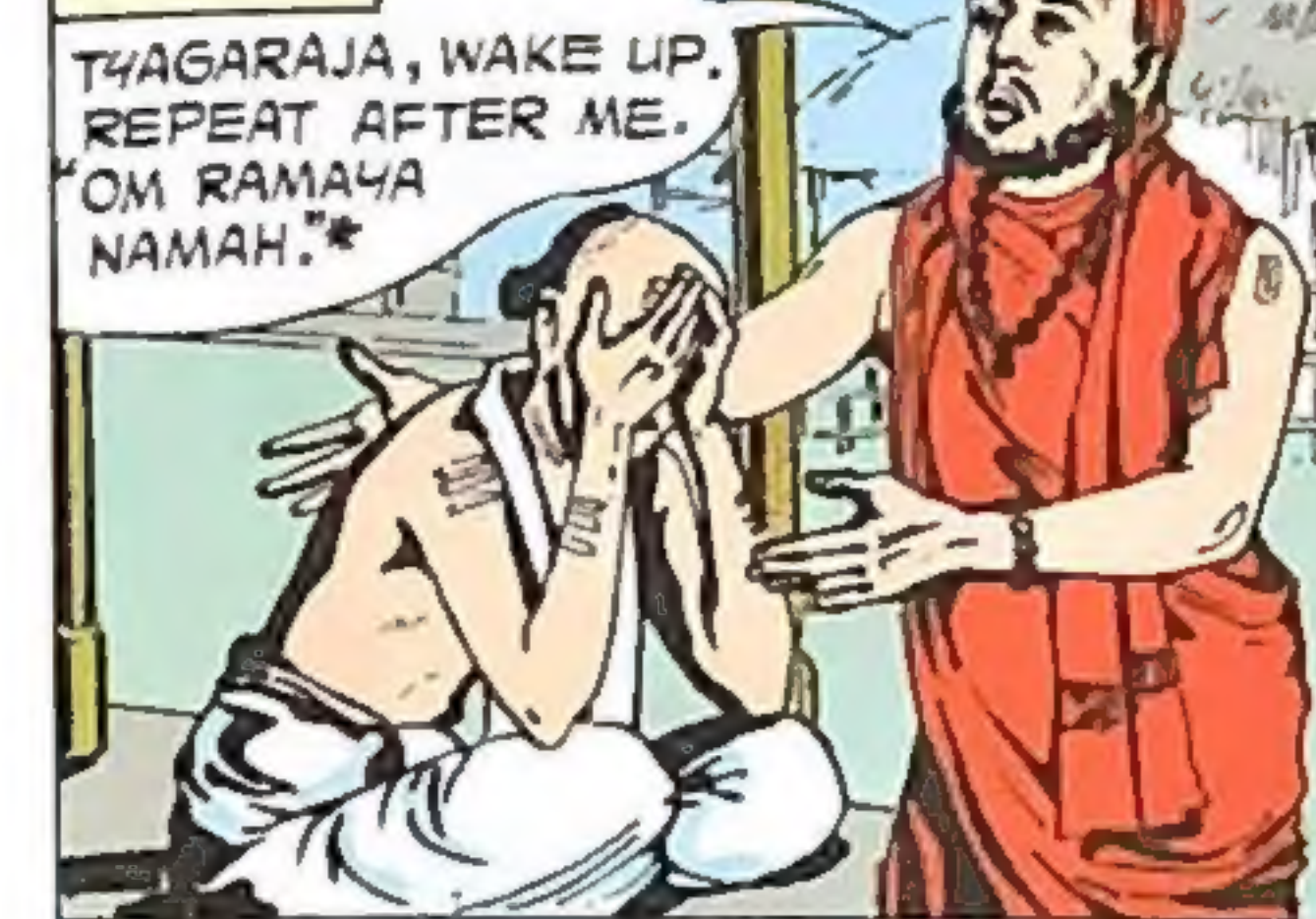
BUT THE TRIUMPH ONLY FILLED THAGARAJA WITH A STRANGE DISCONTENT. ON HIS WAY BACK TO THE VILLAGE —



IT WAS ABOUT THAT TIME THAT THAGARAJA HAD HIS FIRST EXPERIENCE OF A PERSONAL LOSS. RAMABRAHMAM WAS ON HIS DEATH-BED.



THAGARAJA WAS PLUNGED IN GRIEF. IT WAS THEN THAT SWAMI HARIDAS OF KANCHIPURAM PAID HIM A VISIT.



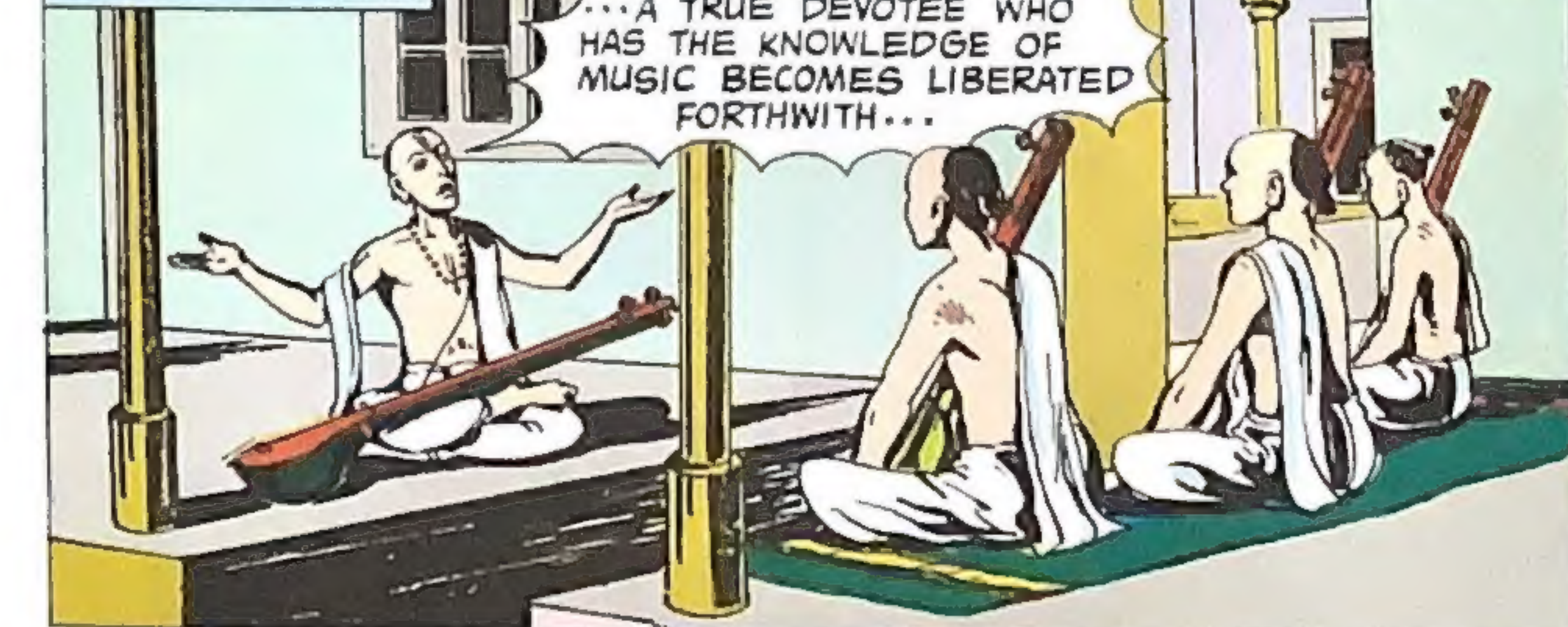
OM RAMAYA NAMAH. MY CHILD, CAST OFF YOUR GRIEF AND CHANT THIS MANTRA WITH UTTER DEVOTION 96 CRORE TIMES. LORD RAMA WILL APPEAR BEFORE YOU.



FROM THEN ON THAGARAJA BEGAN TO LEAD A VERY SIMPLE LIFE INSPIRED BY HIGH IDEALS. AFTER AN EARLY BATH HE WOULD OFFER WORSHIP TO RAMA.



BY NOW HIS FAME HAD SPREAD AND MANY DISCIPLES CAME TO LEARN MUSIC FROM HIM.



AT NOON ONCE A WEEK HE WOULD GO OUT WITH THEM INTO THE STREET SINGING SONGS.



HOW GREAT AND GRAND IS DEVOTION TO OUR BELOVED FATHER RAMA...

PEOPLE CONSIDERED THEMSELVES BLESSED IF THAGARAJA ACCEPTED THEIR OFFERINGS.

THAT'S ENOUGH. THE VESSEL IS FULL.



WON'T YOU LET ME GIVE YOU ALL OF IT?

IN REPLY TO HER, THAGARAJA SANG—



...ALL THAT YOU NEED IS A HANDFUL OF RICE...O MIND, IN THE MAD PURSUIT OF WEALTH FORGET NOT HARI, THE ESSENCE OF THE UNIVERSE.

HE COLLECTED ONLY WHAT WAS REQUIRED BY HIS FAMILY, HIS DISCIPLES AND HIS VISITORS FOR THAT WEEK.

IN THE AFTERNOON THAGARAJA SAT INSIDE THE DAKSHINA KAILASA TEMPLE AND CHANTED THE MANTRA.

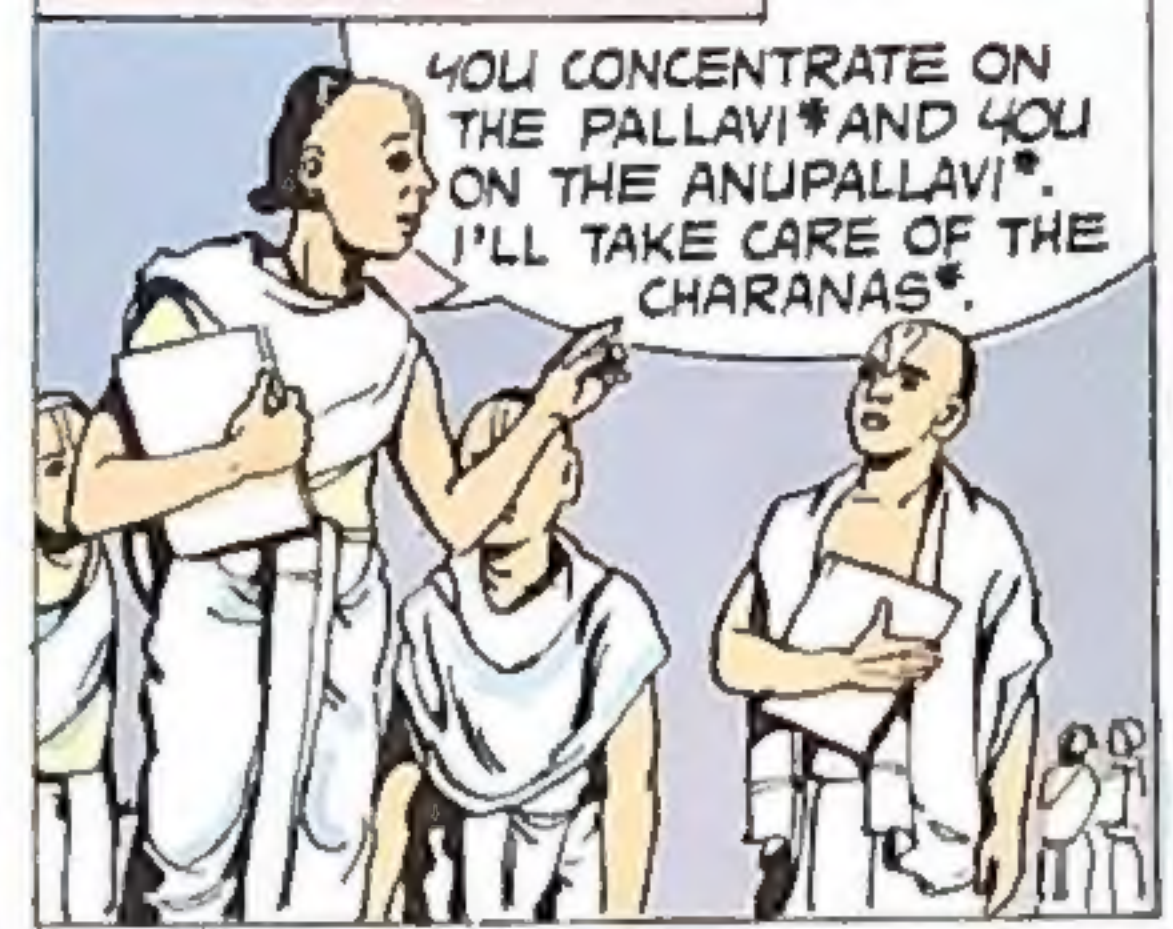


OM RAMA NAMAH
OM RAMA...

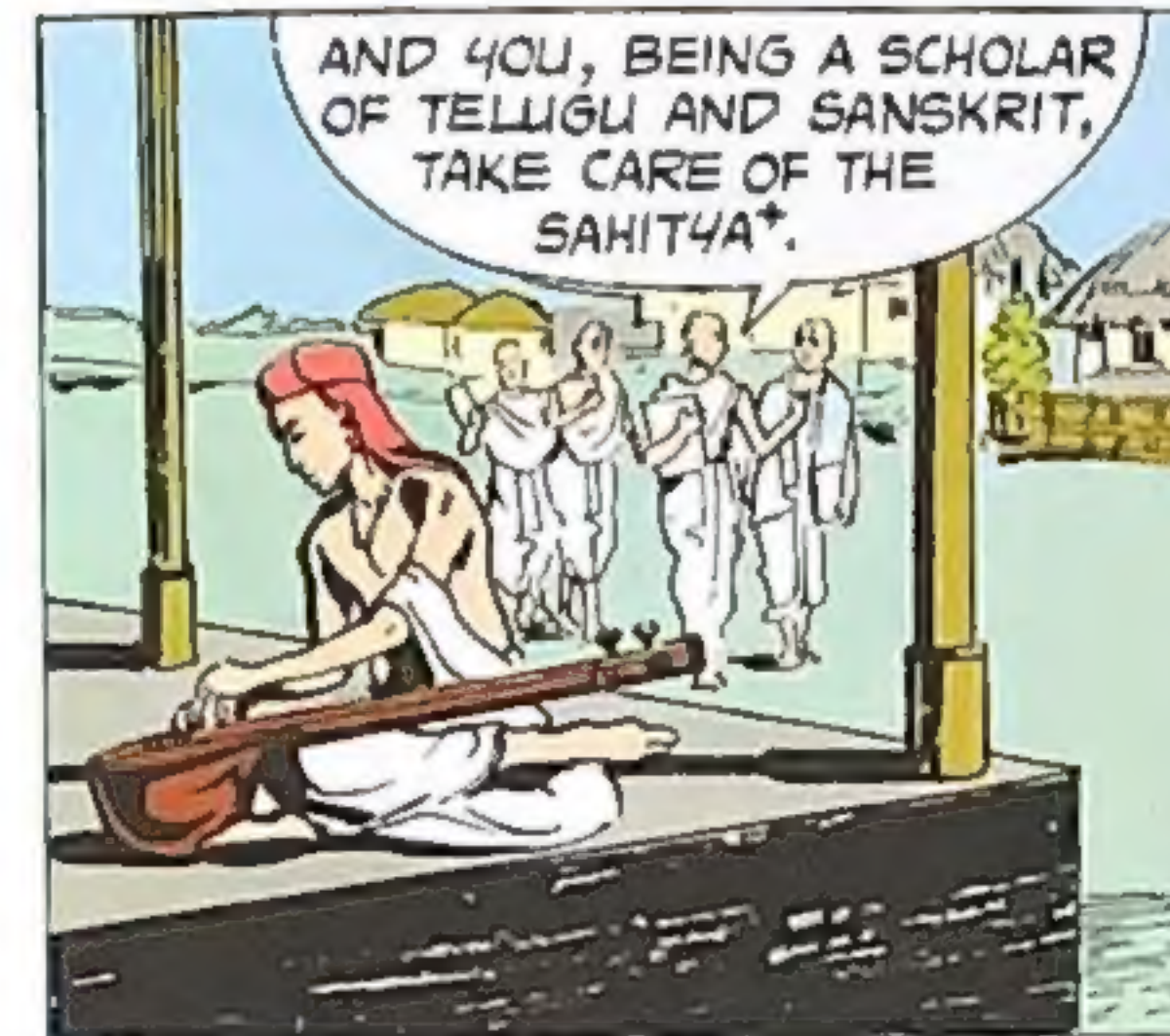
THE APPEAL OF THE SONGS THAT GUSHED OUT OF HIM NOW, BROUGHT HIM MANY MORE DISCIPLES.



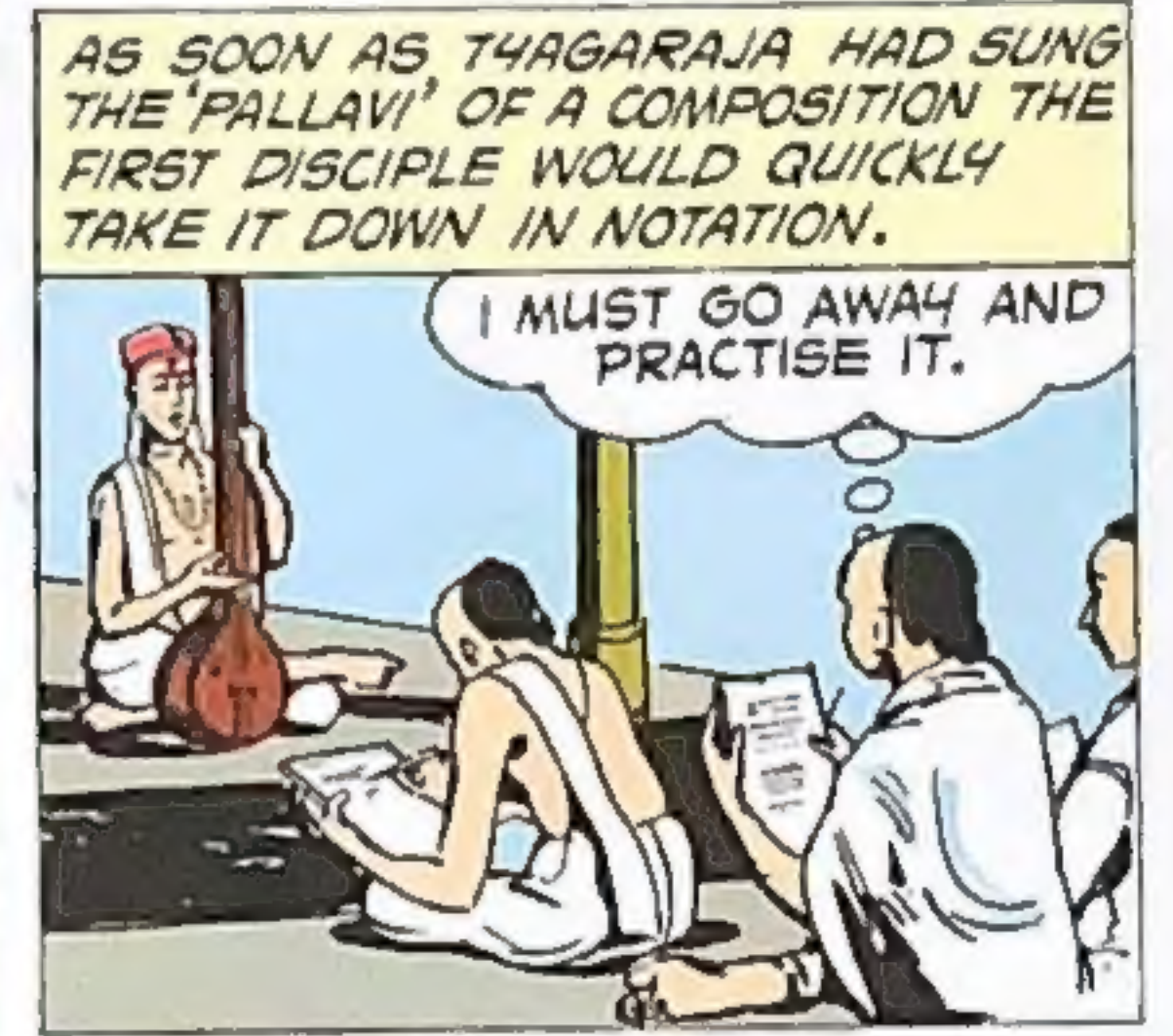
THEY HAD A UNIQUE WAY OF RECORDING HIS COMPOSITIONS FOR POSTERITY. THEY DIVIDED THEMSELVES INTO GROUPS OF FOUR.



YOU CONCENTRATE ON THE PALLAVI* AND YOU ON THE ANUPALLAVI*. I'LL TAKE CARE OF THE CHARANAS*.



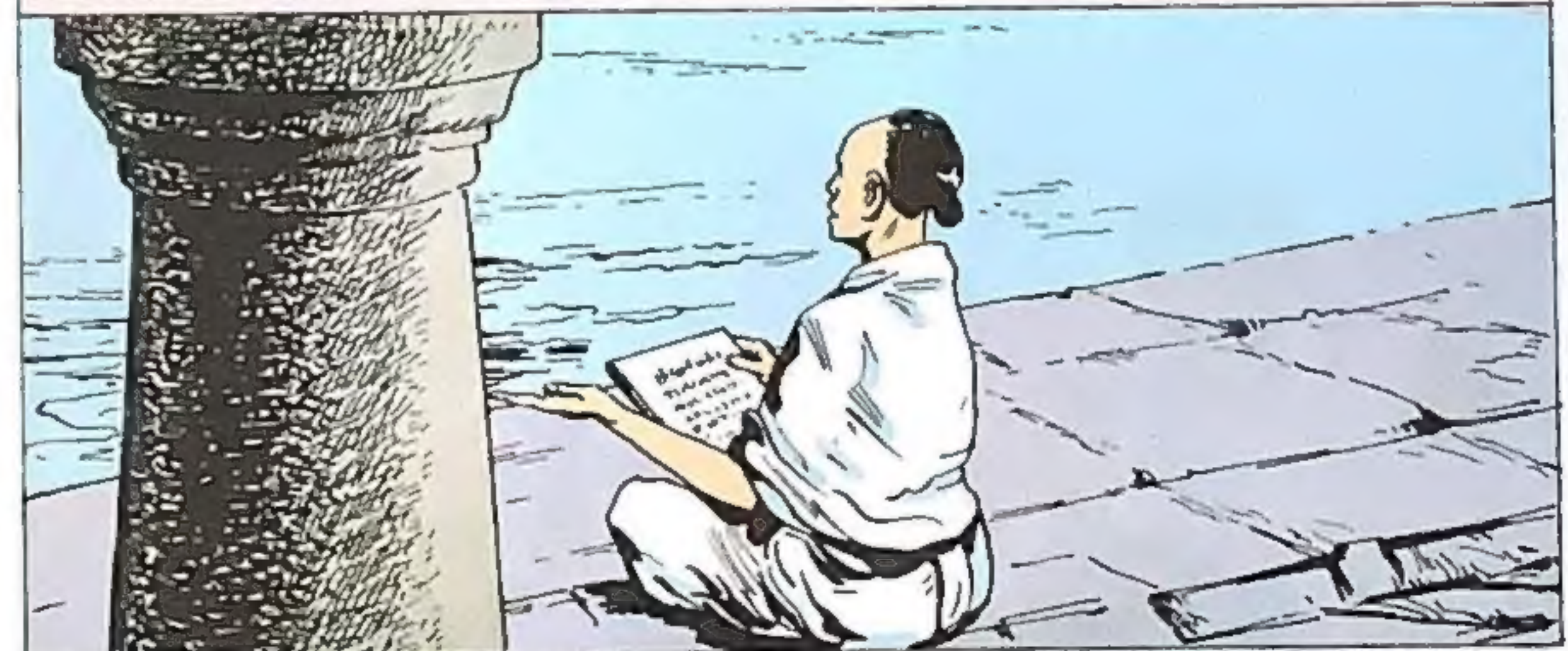
AND YOU, BEING A SCHOLAR OF TELLUGU AND SANSKRIT, TAKE CARE OF THE SAHITYA*.



AS SOON AS THAGARAJA HAD SUNG THE 'PALLAVI' OF A COMPOSITION THE FIRST DISCIPLE WOULD QUICKLY TAKE IT DOWN IN NOTATION.

I MUST GO AWAY AND PRACTISE IT.

HE WOULD RUN TO THE BANKS OF THE RIVER KAVERI AND MEMORISE IT.

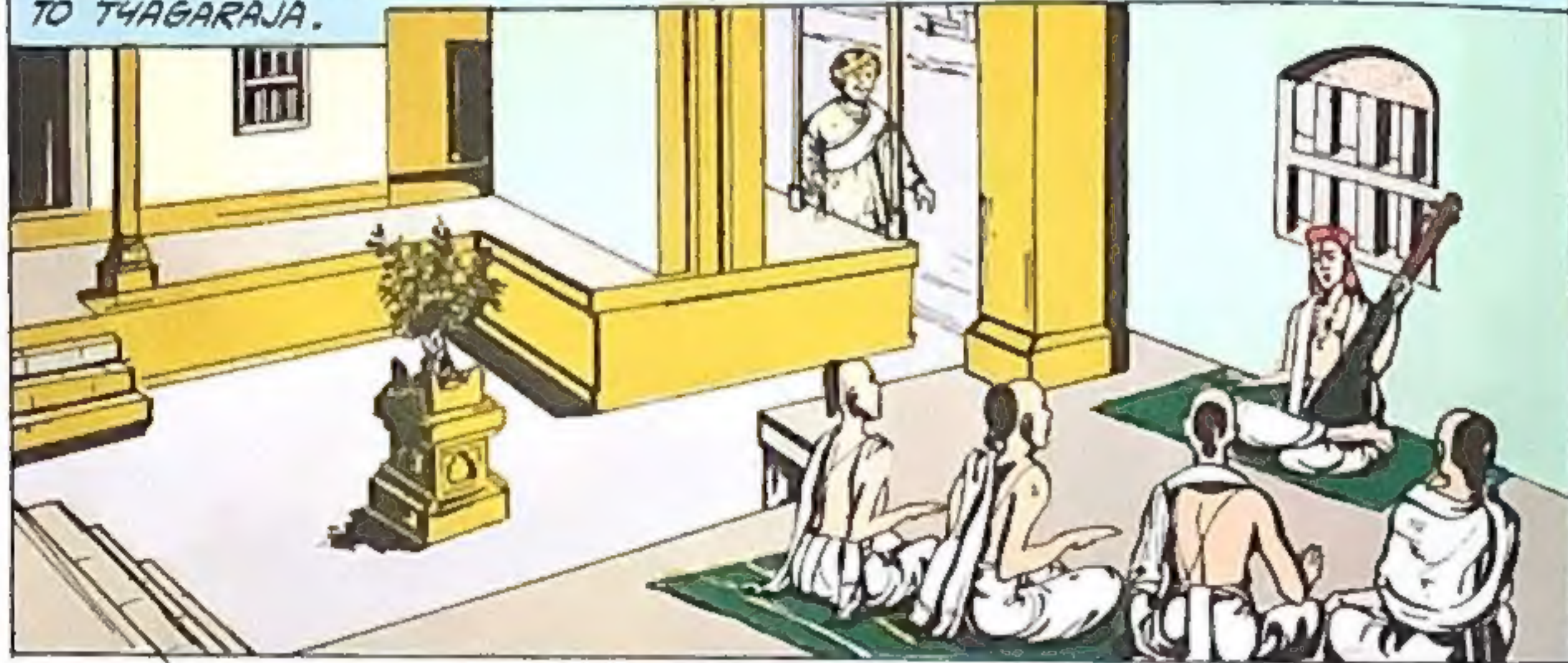


* THE THREE SEQUENCES OF A COMPOSITION + THE WORDS OF THE SONG

AT THE END OF THE SEQUENCES THAT FOLLOWED, THE OTHERS WOULD DO THE SAME.



THE NEXT DAY THEY SAT TOGETHER, PRACTISED THE FULL PIECE AND SANG IT TO THAGARAJA.



THANK YOU! THANK YOU FOR ENABLING ME TO HEAR MY OWN COMPOSITIONS.



THAT'S NOT ENOUGH, THAGARAJA. THE CONNOISSEUR OF MUSIC MUST HEAR THEM.



YOU MUST SING FOR MY FATHER. I AM GOING TO THANJAVUR FOR THE MUSIC FESTIVAL. WON'T YOU COME WITH ME?

TO SING FOR THE GREAT VENKATA SUBBAYYA? SIR, IT'S AN HONOUR.



ALL THE FAMOUS MUSICIANS WHO HAD REACHED THANJAVUR CAME TO SONTI VENKATA SUBBAYYA'S HOUSE.

LET US LISTEN TO YOUNG THAGARAJA FOR A WHILE BEFORE WE GO TO THE PALACE FOR THE FUNCTION.



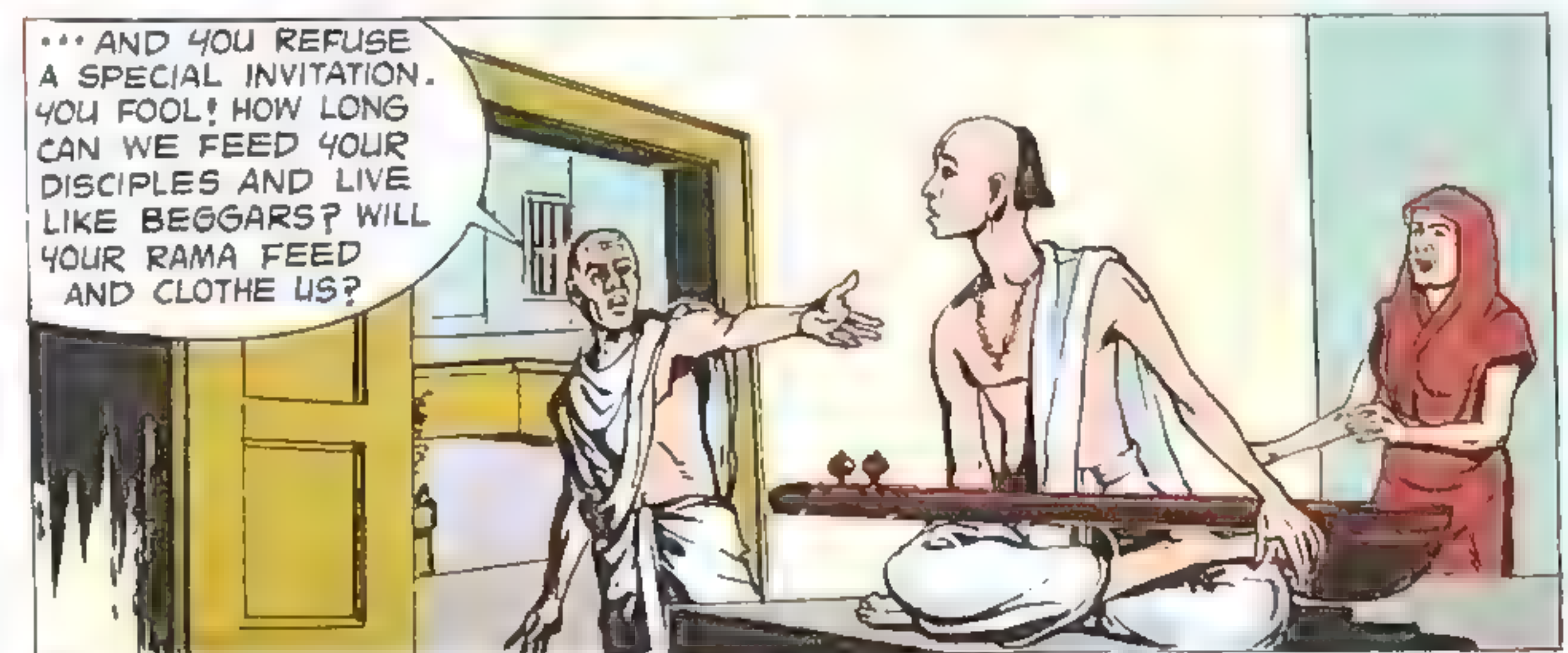
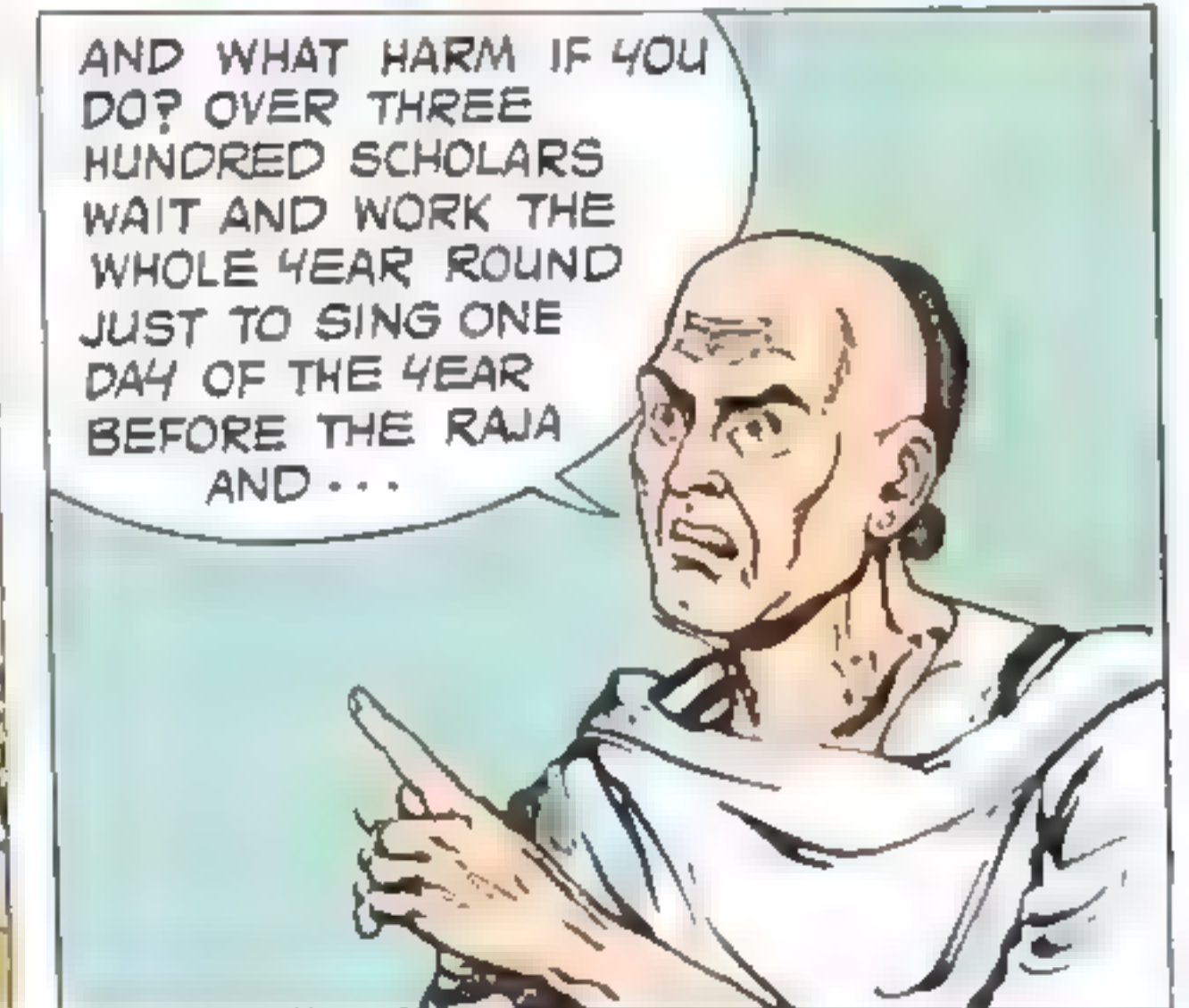
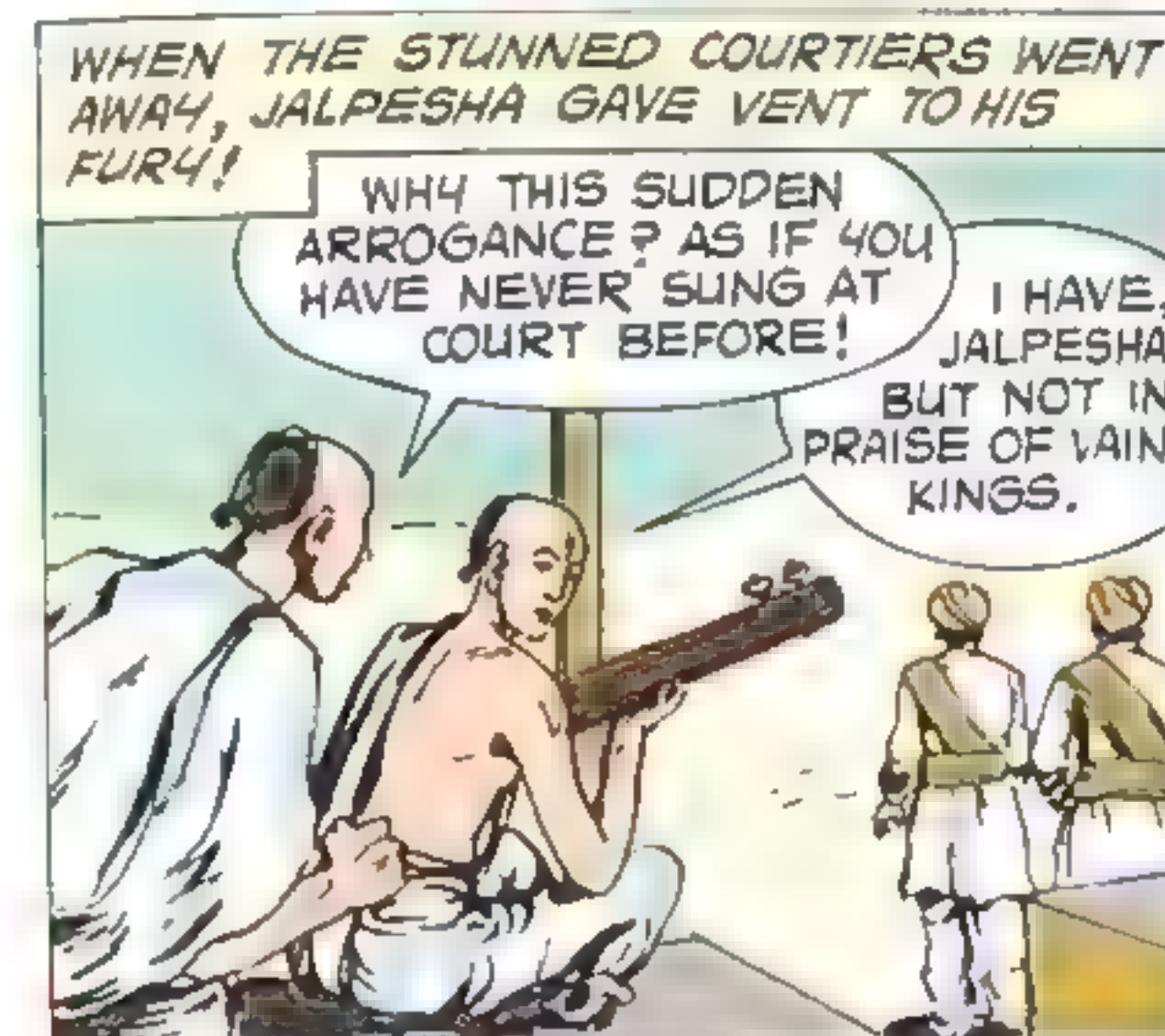
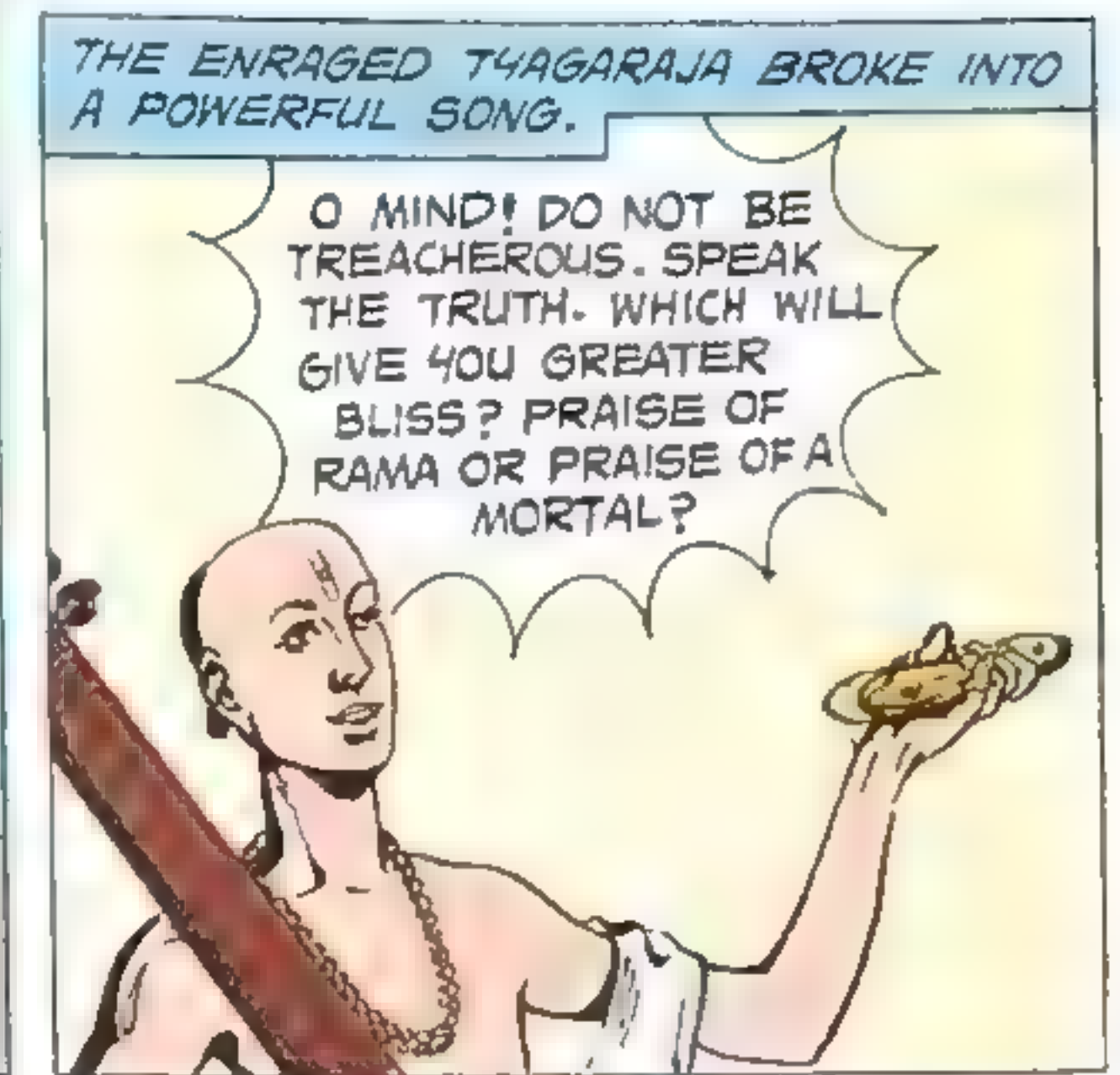
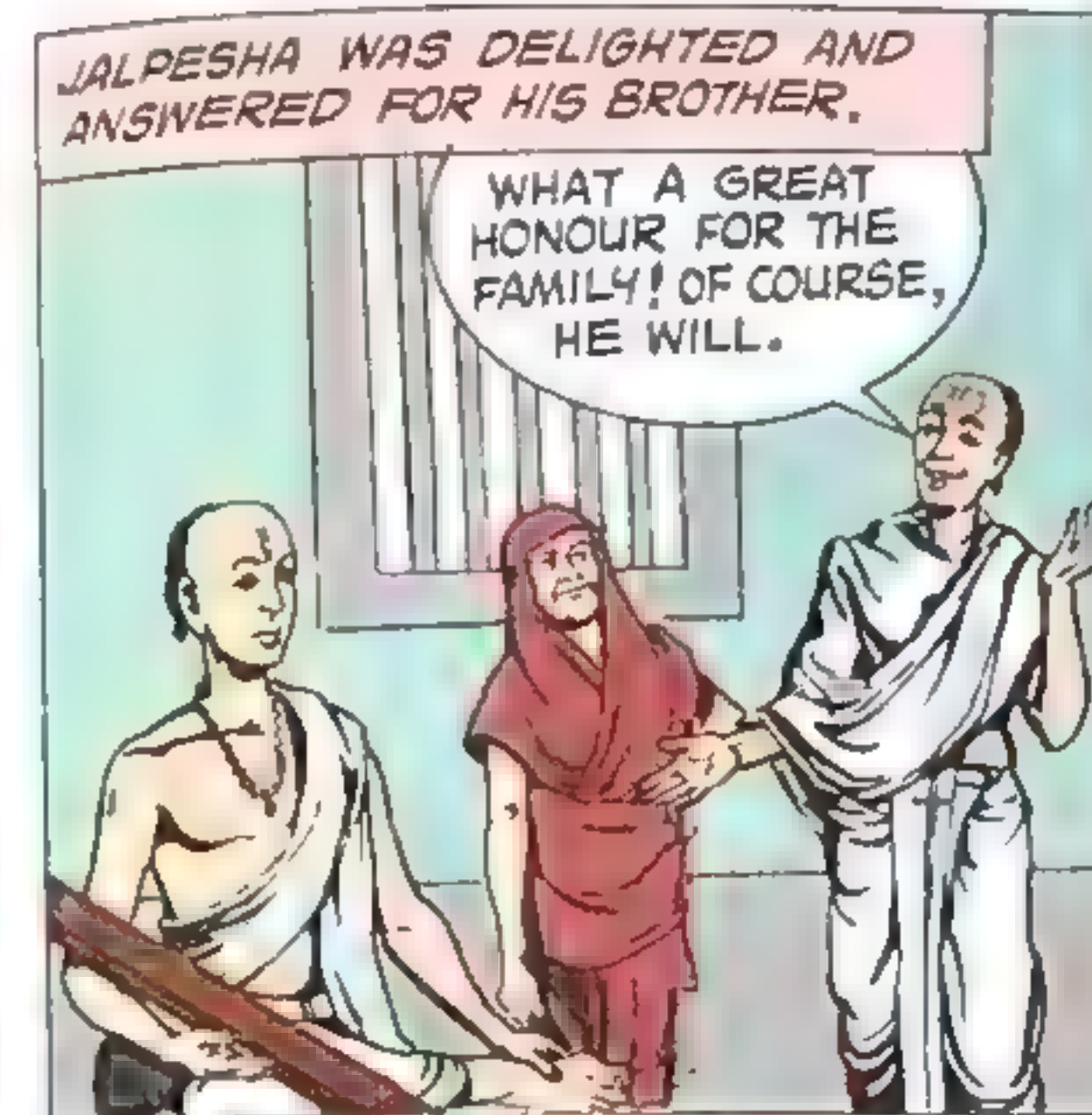
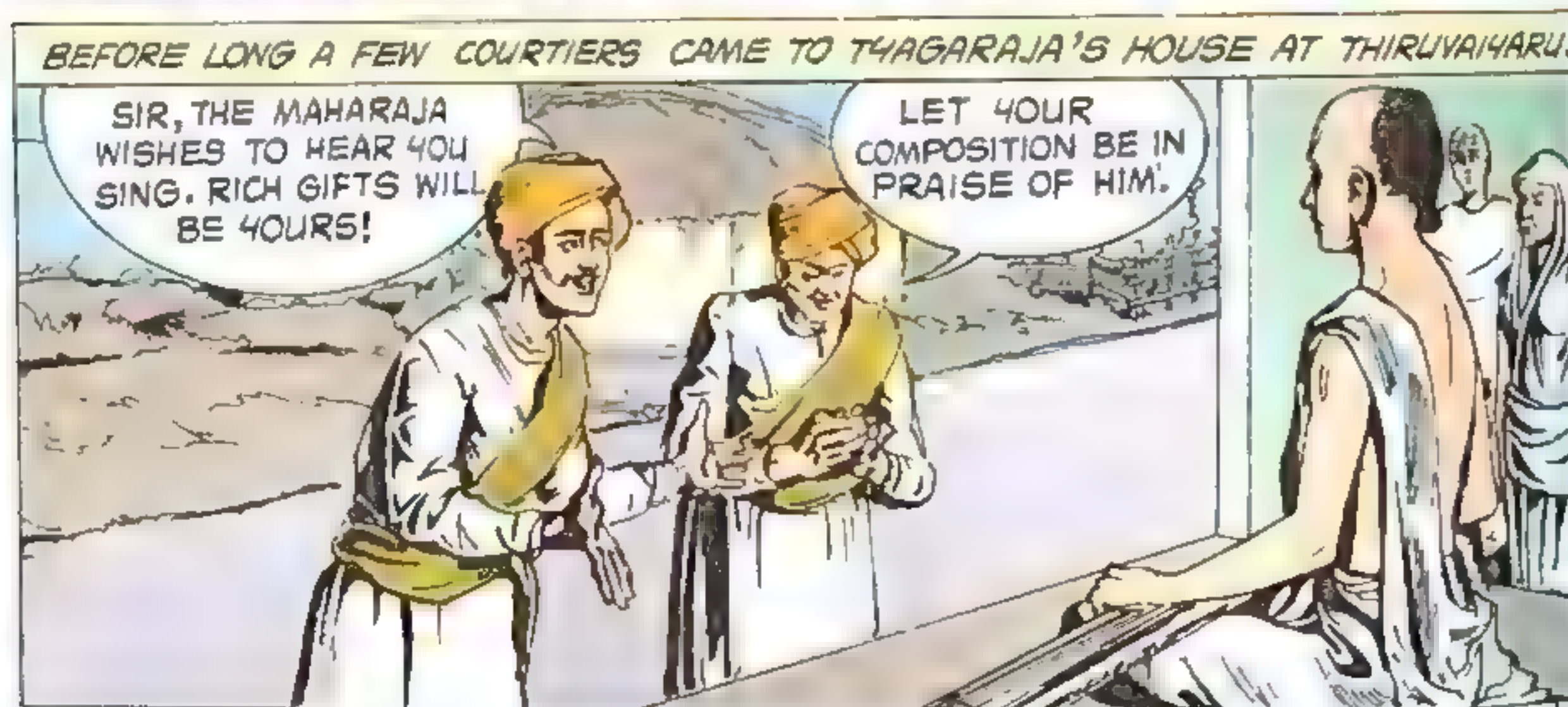
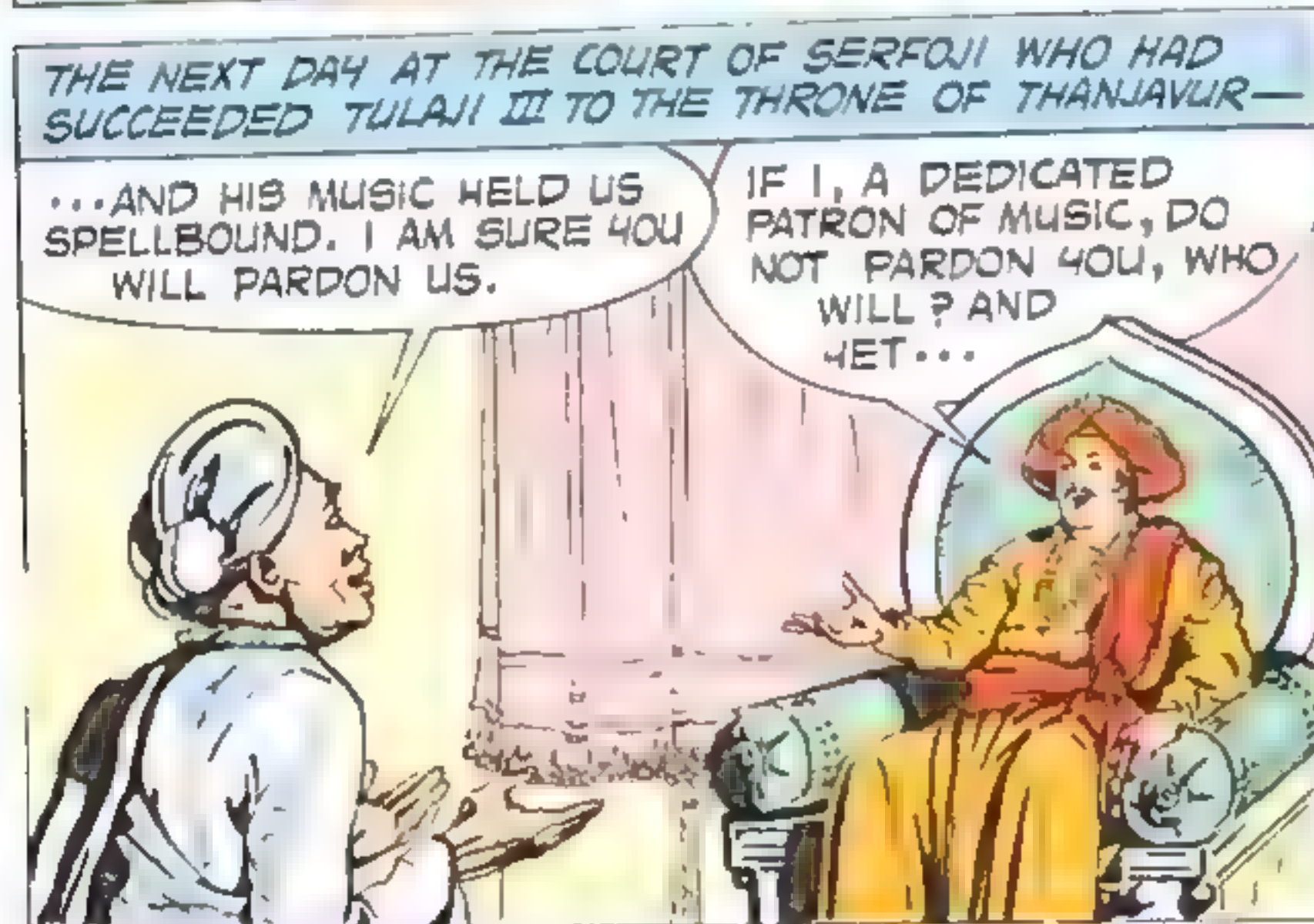
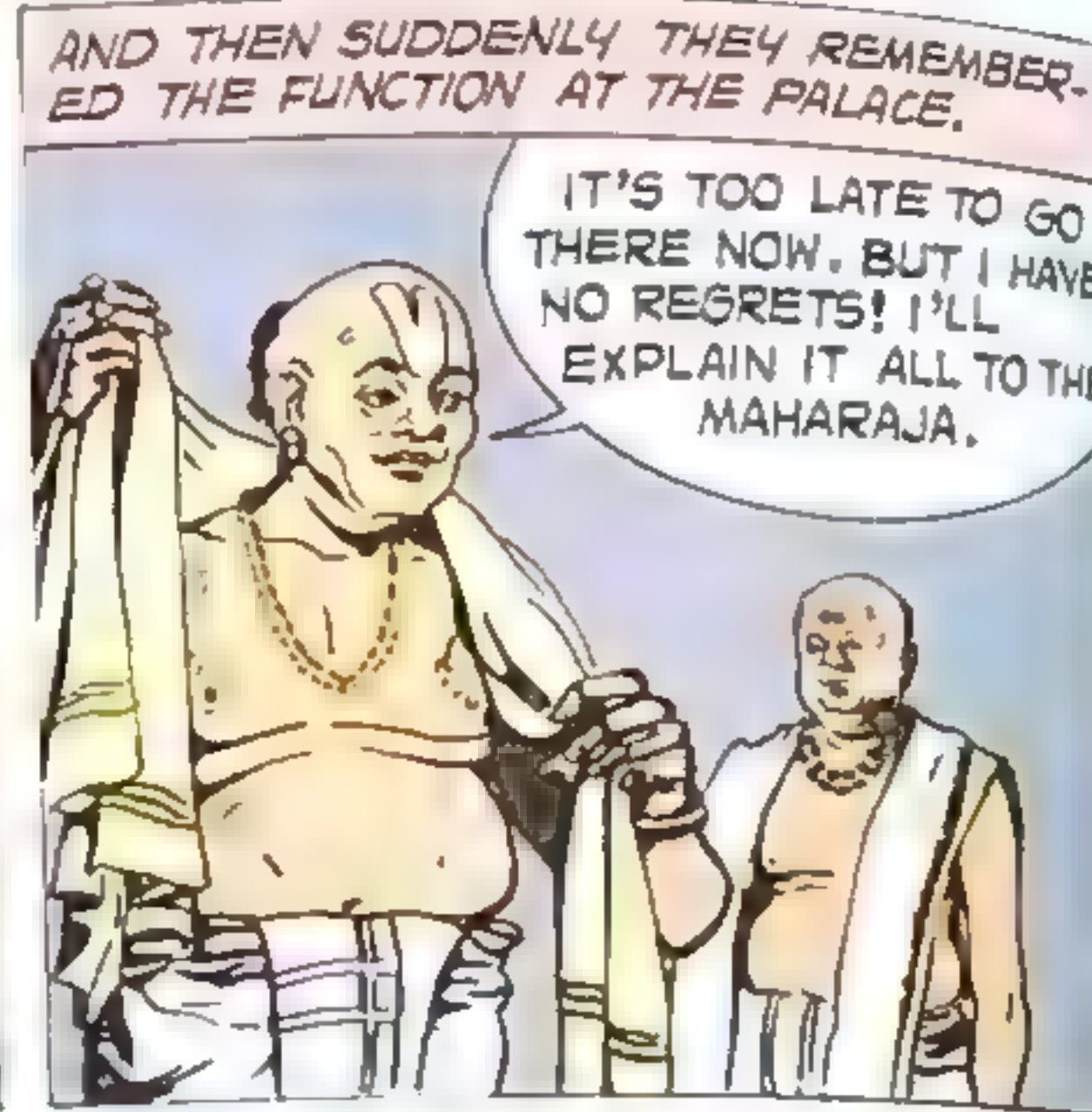
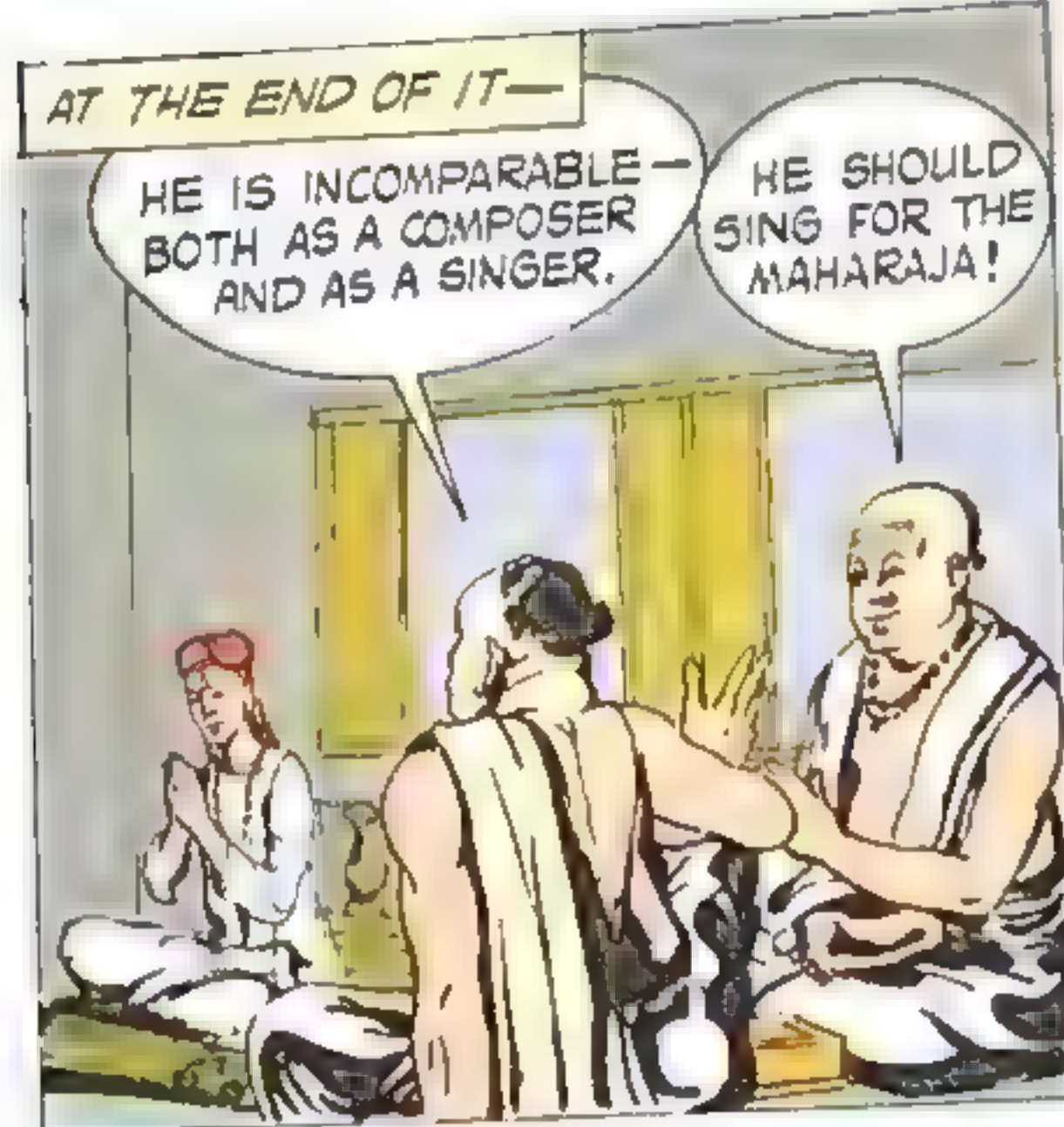
AS THAGARAJA BEGAN TO SING, THE MUSICIANS WERE ENCHANTED.

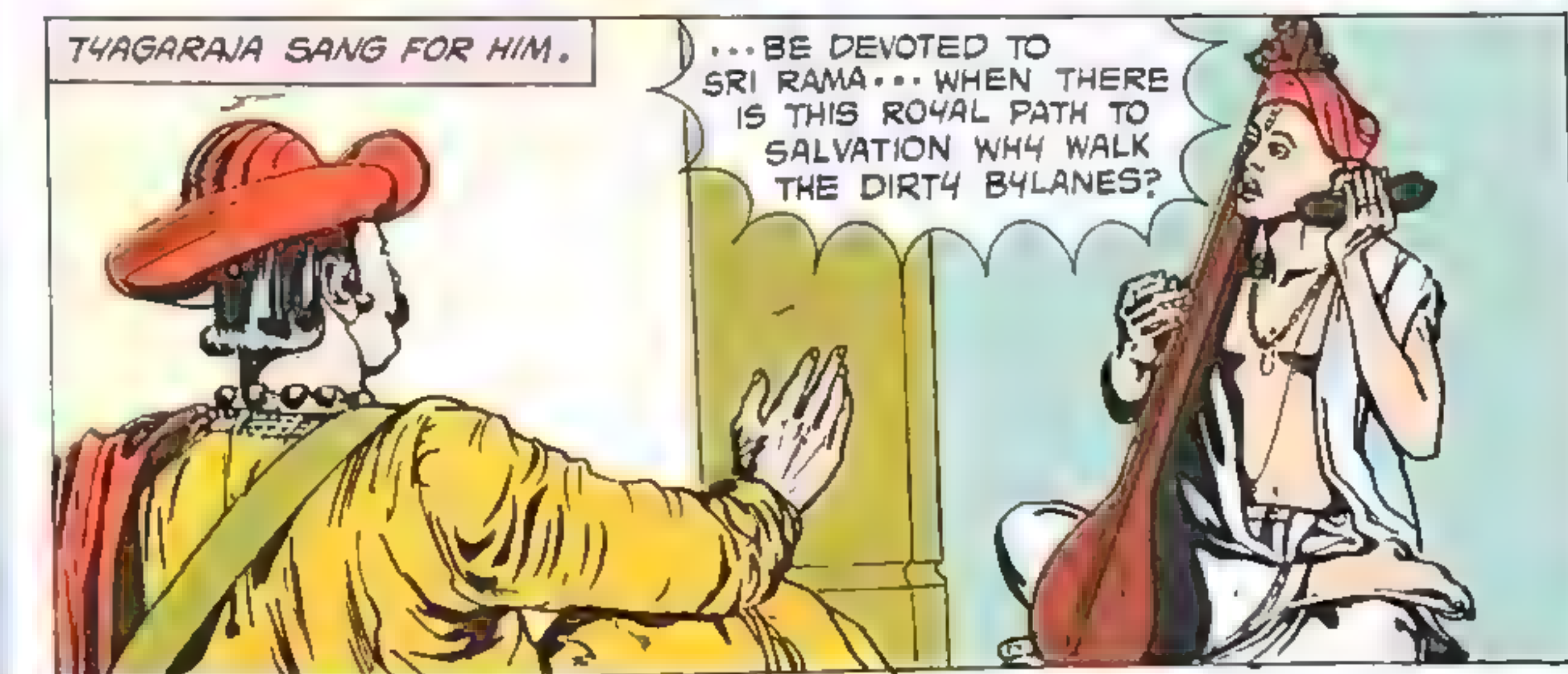
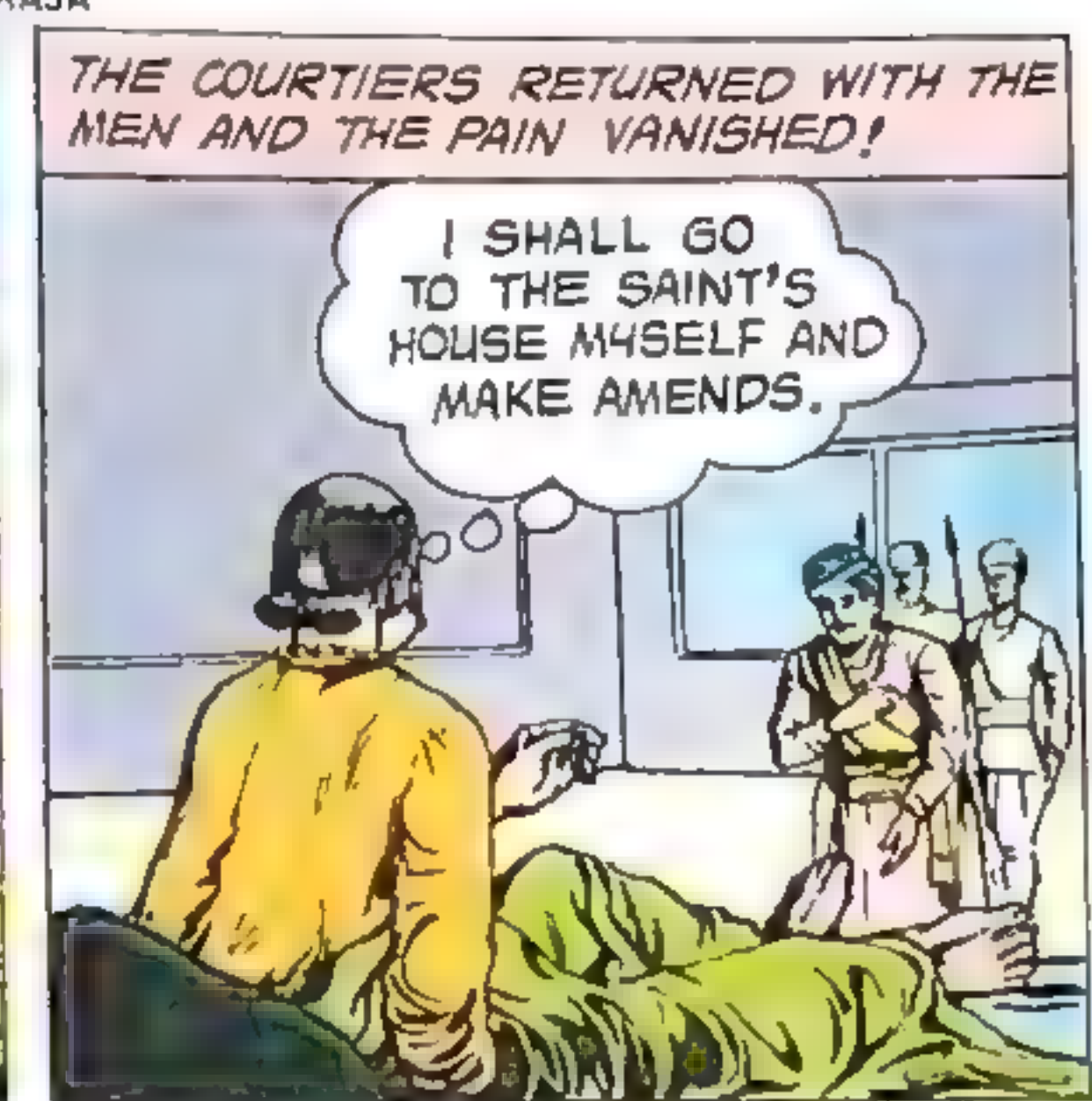
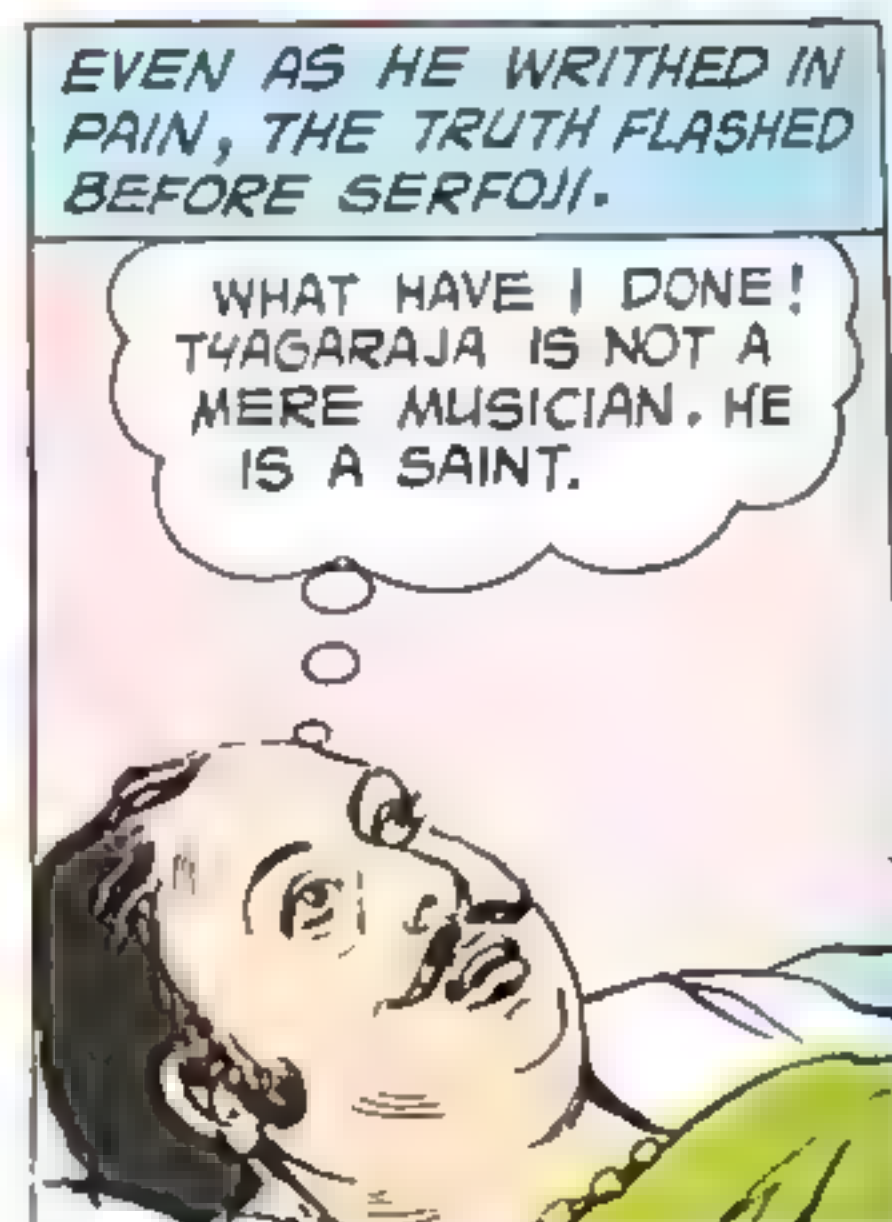
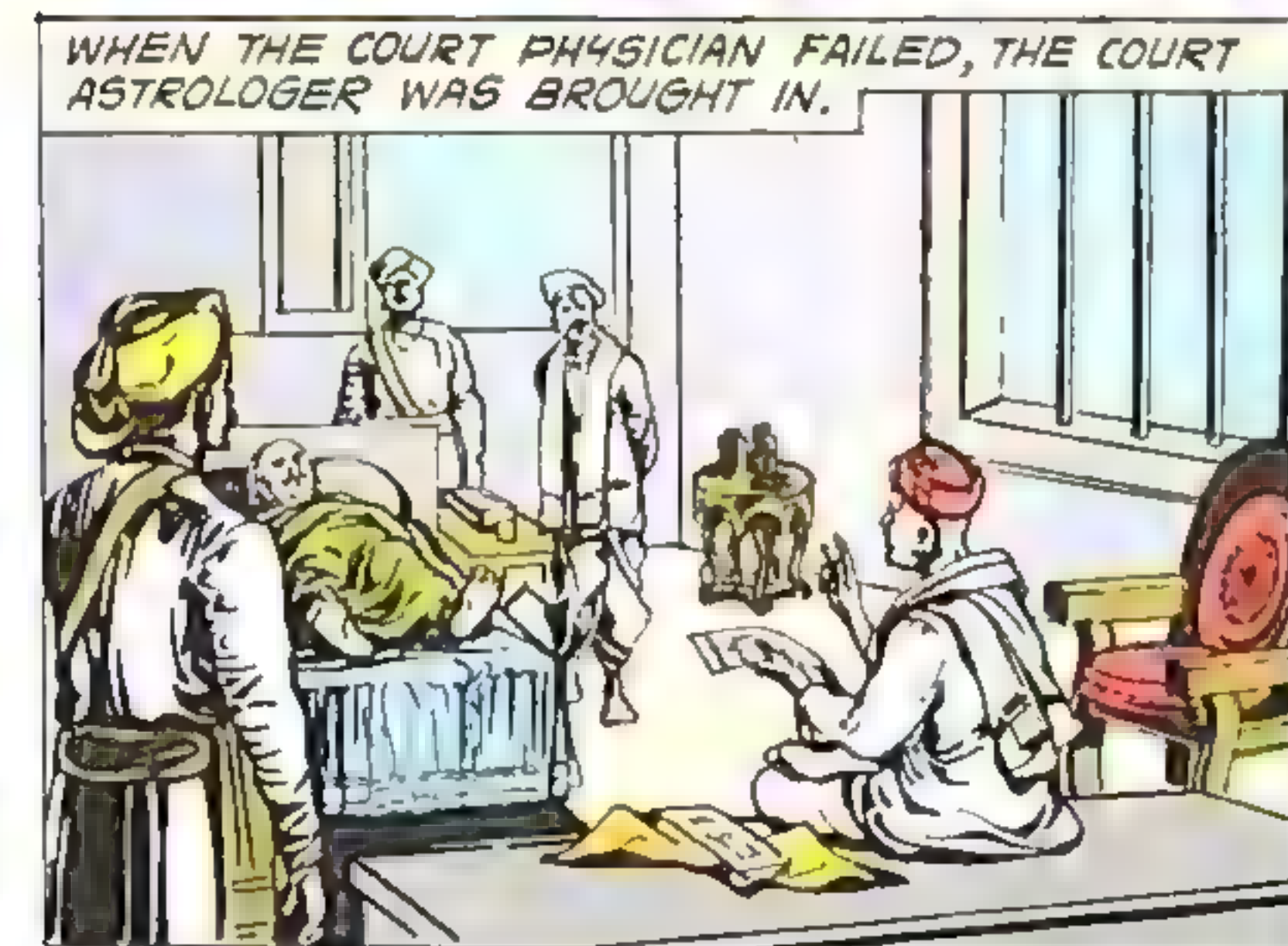
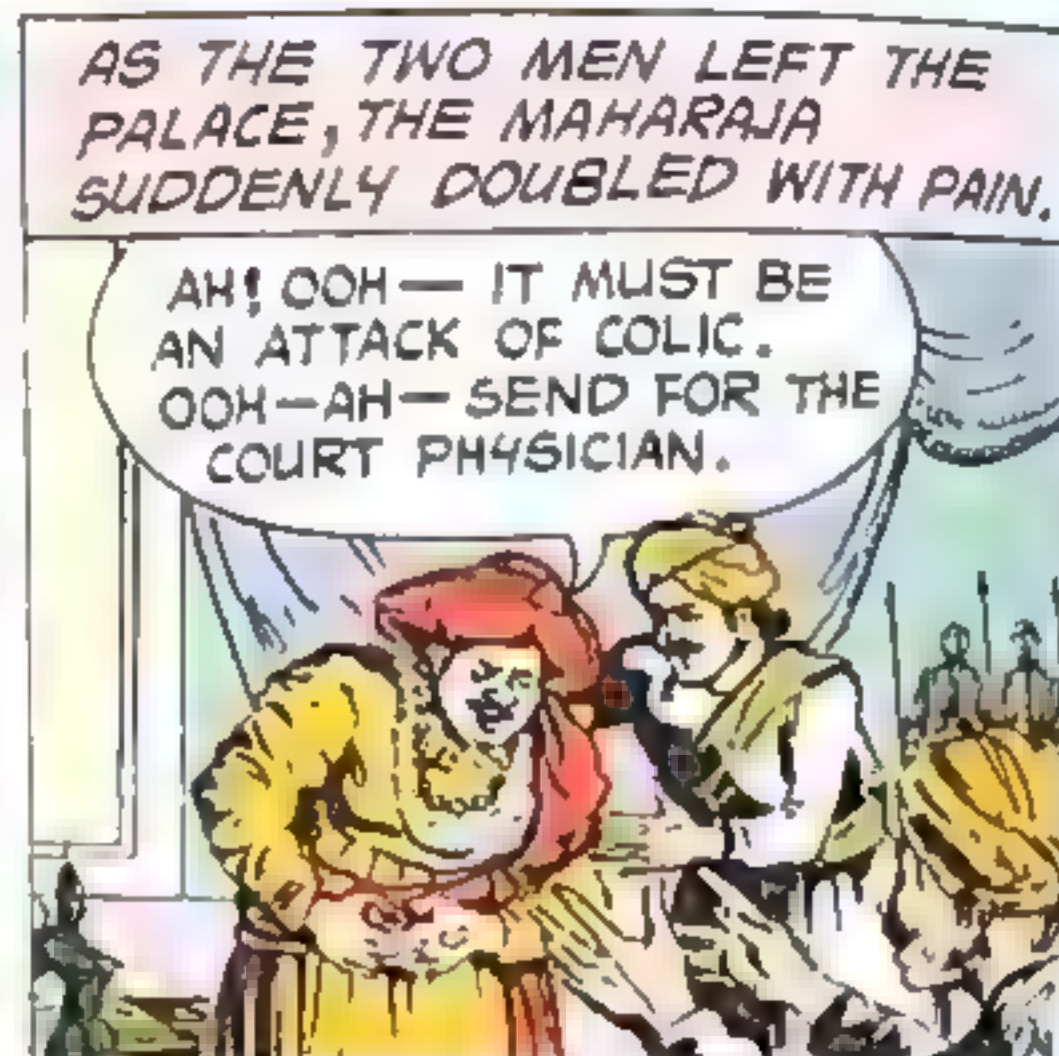
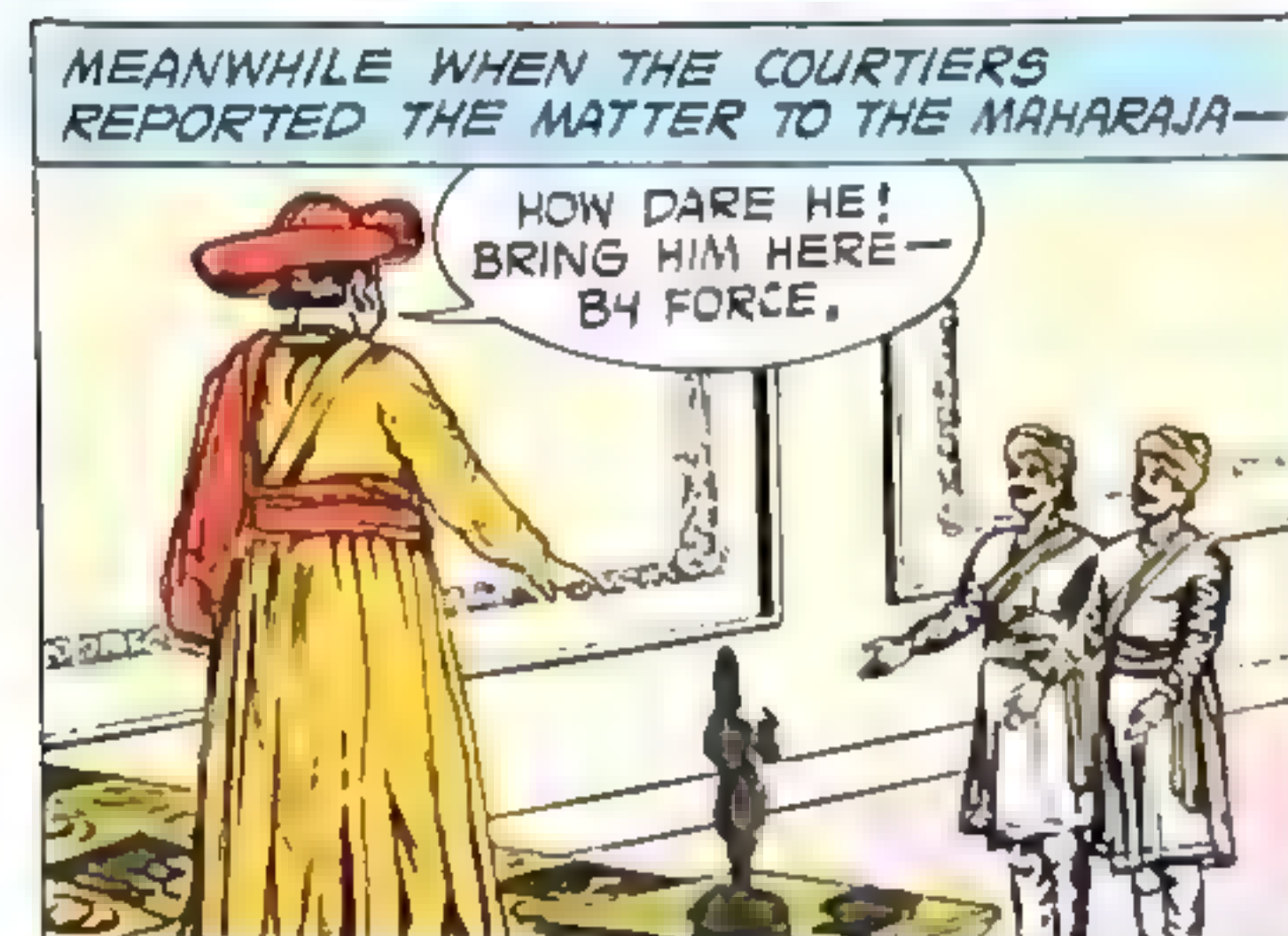
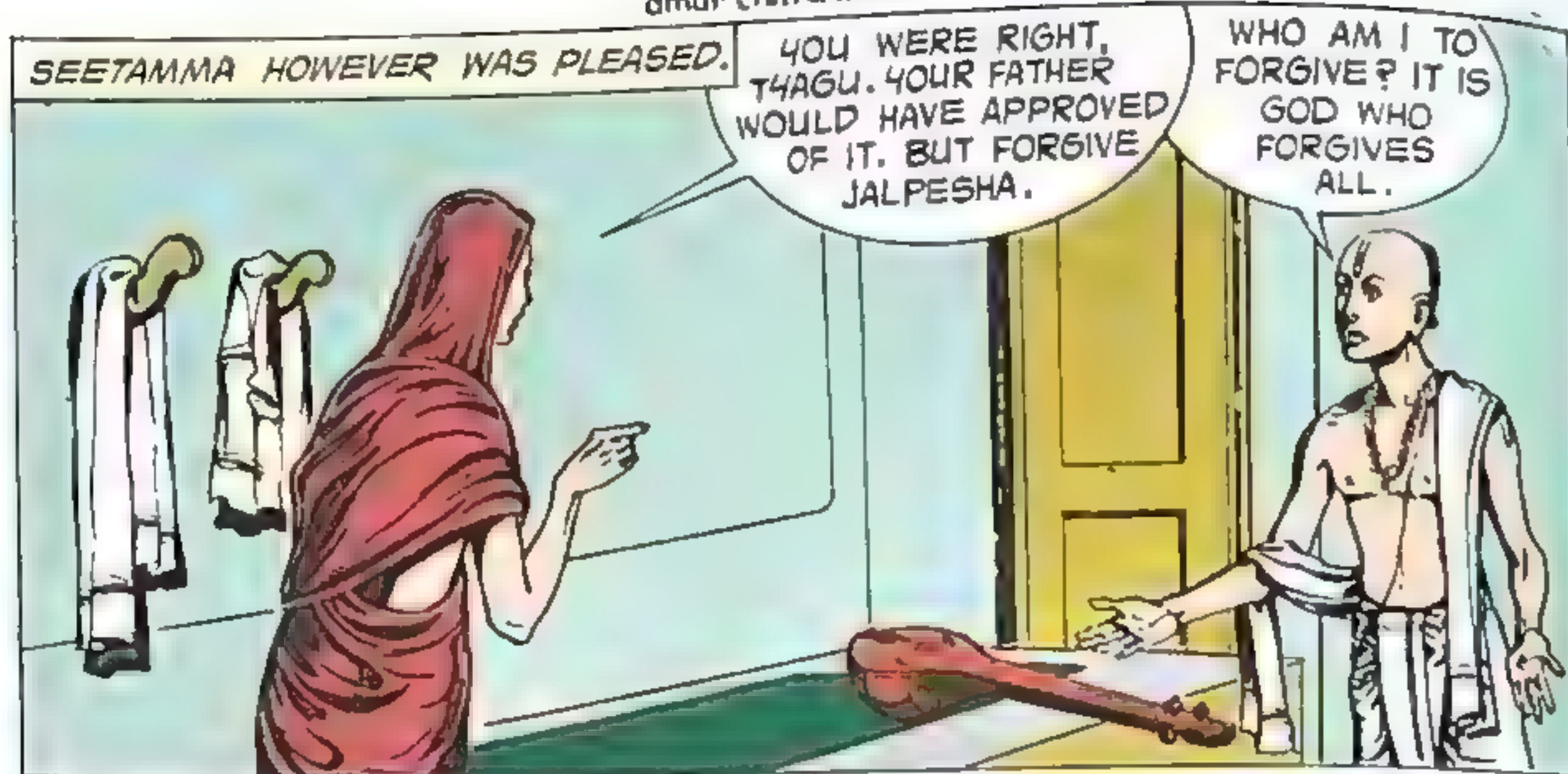
AGAIN AND AGAIN I CRY OUT FOR YOU, YET YOU REMAIN UNMOVED...

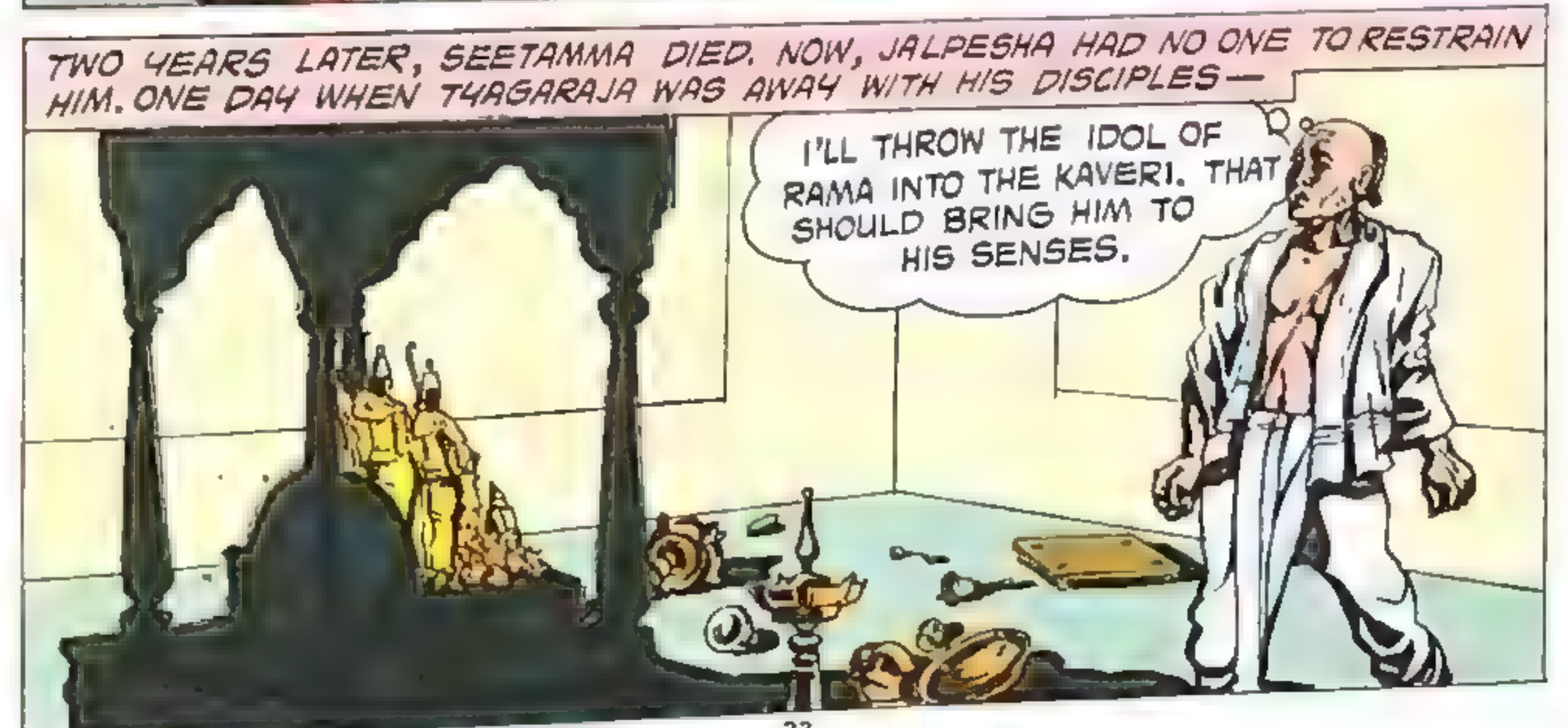
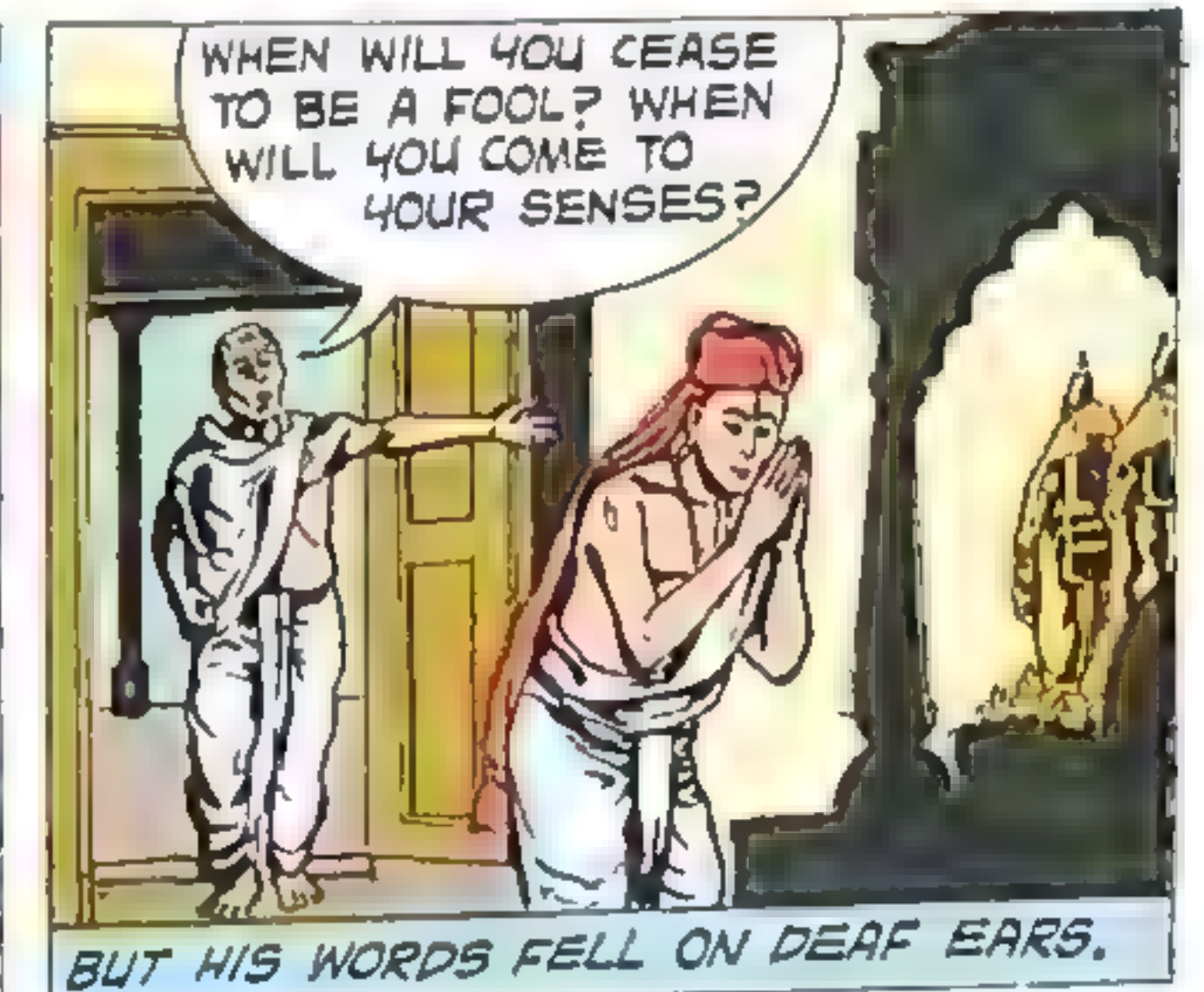
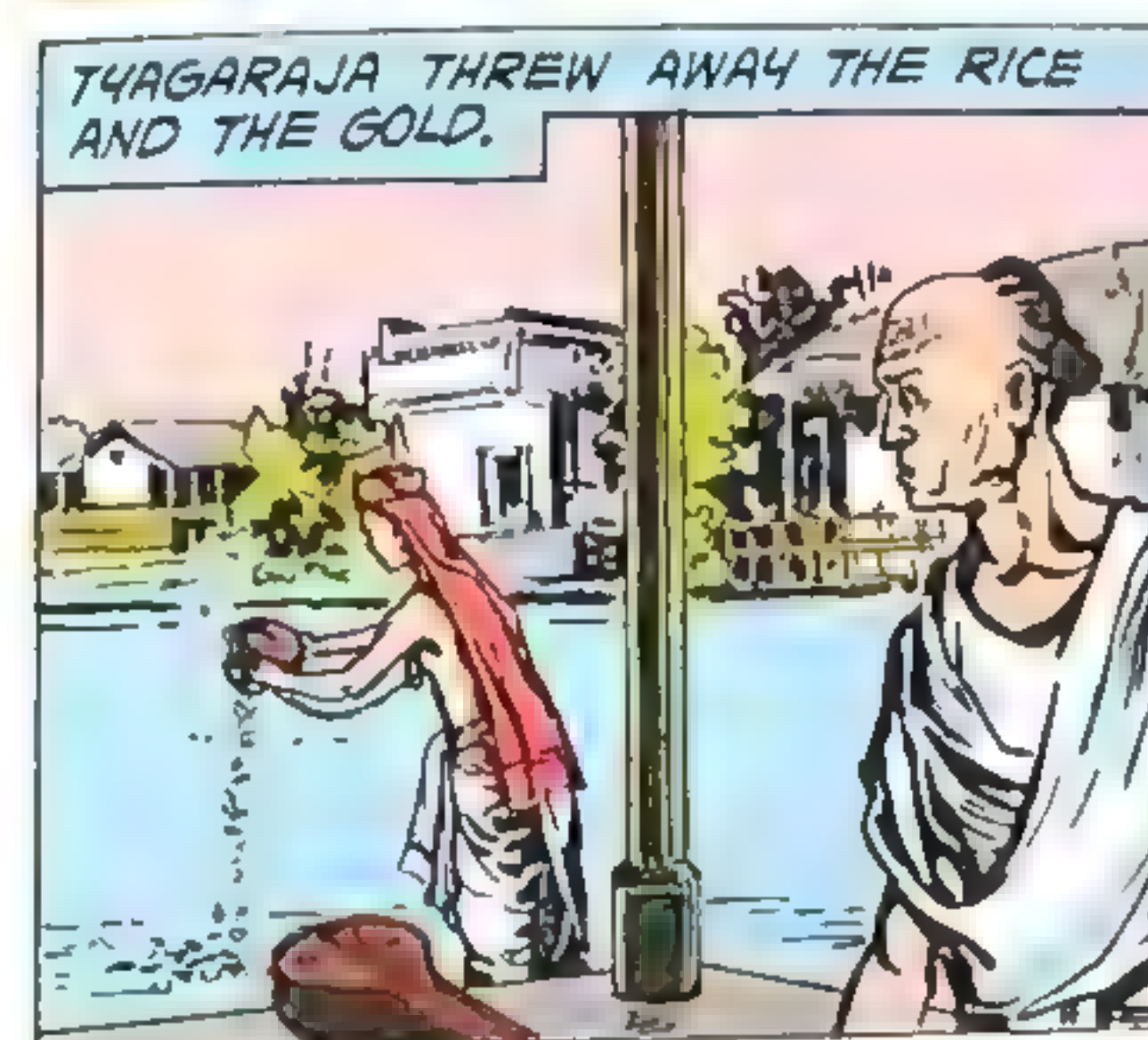
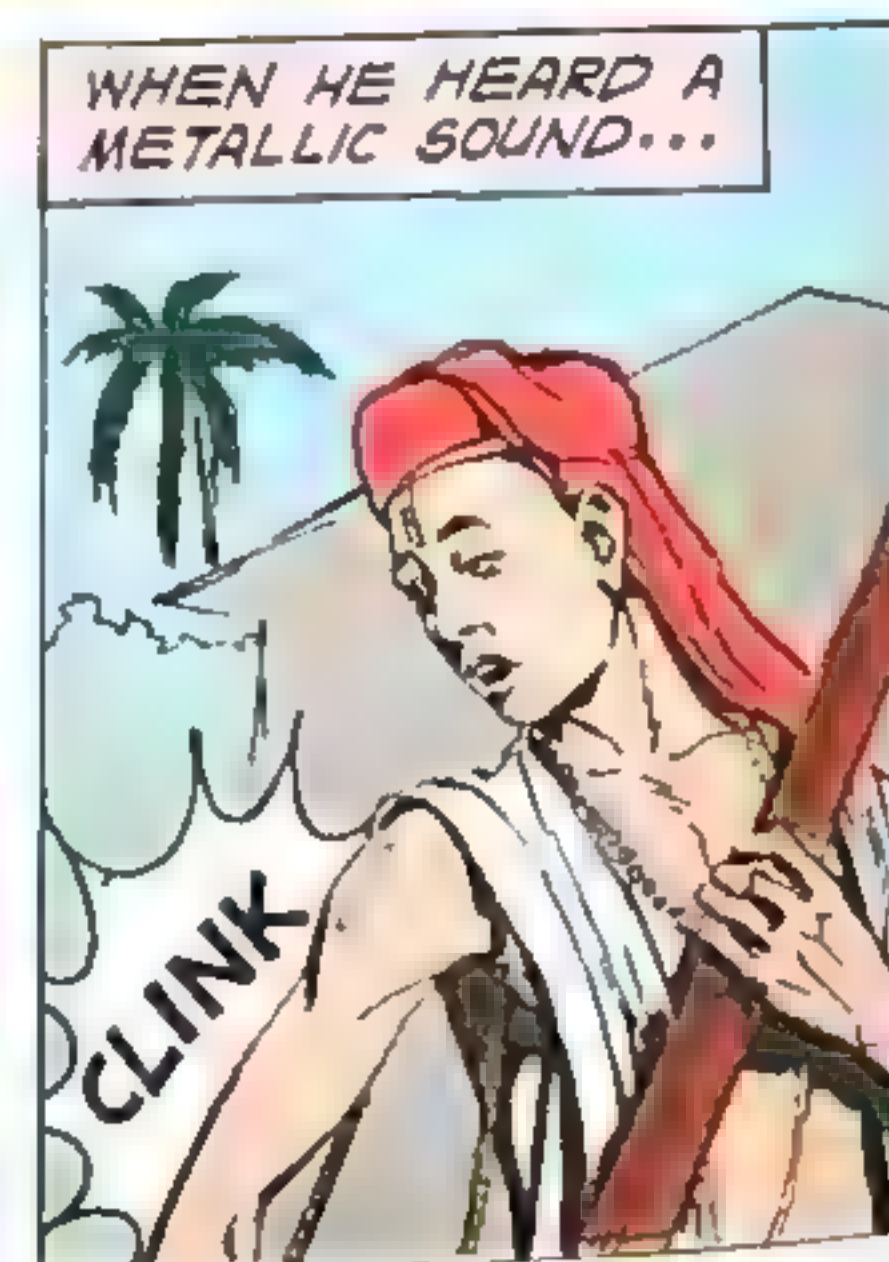
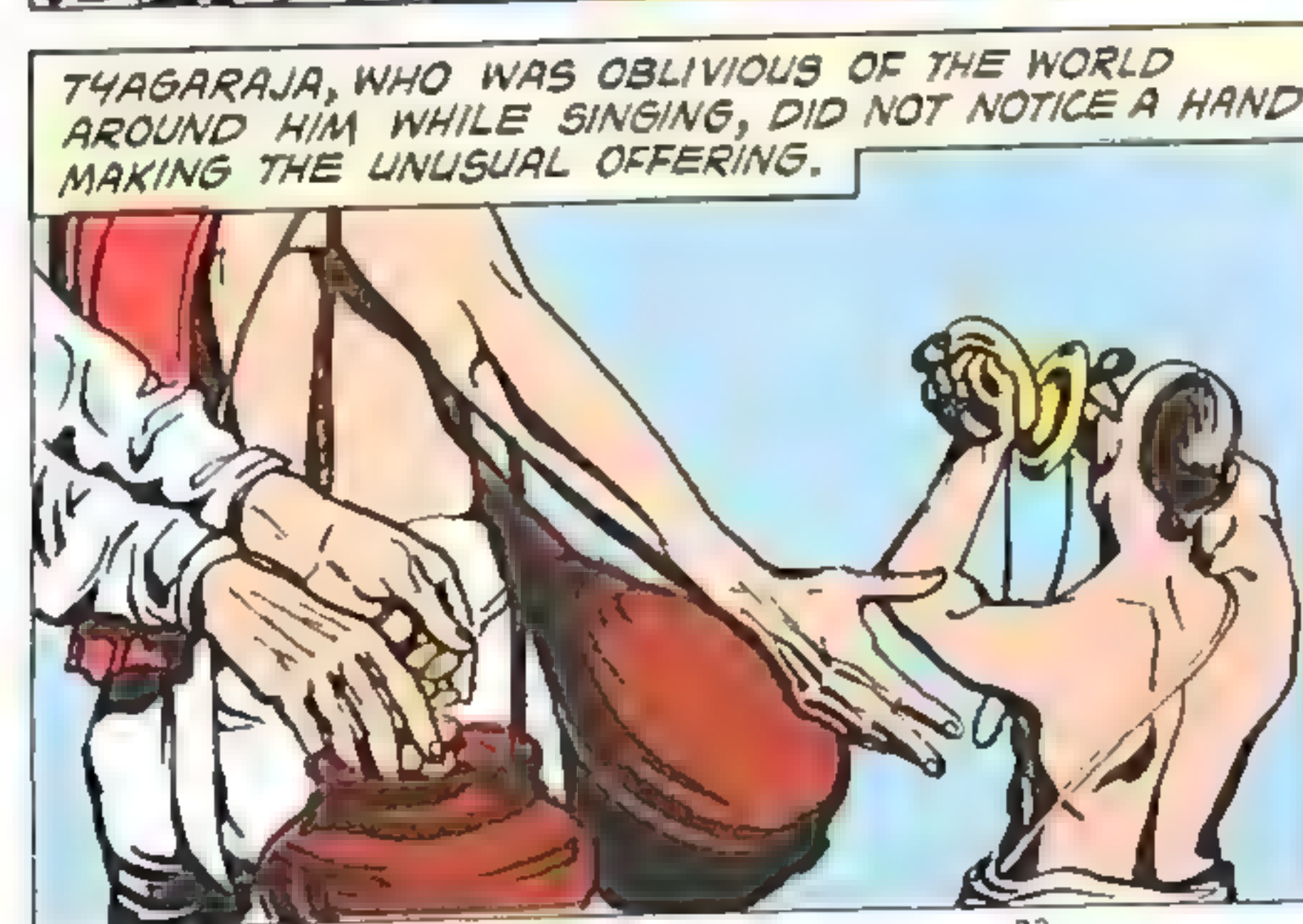
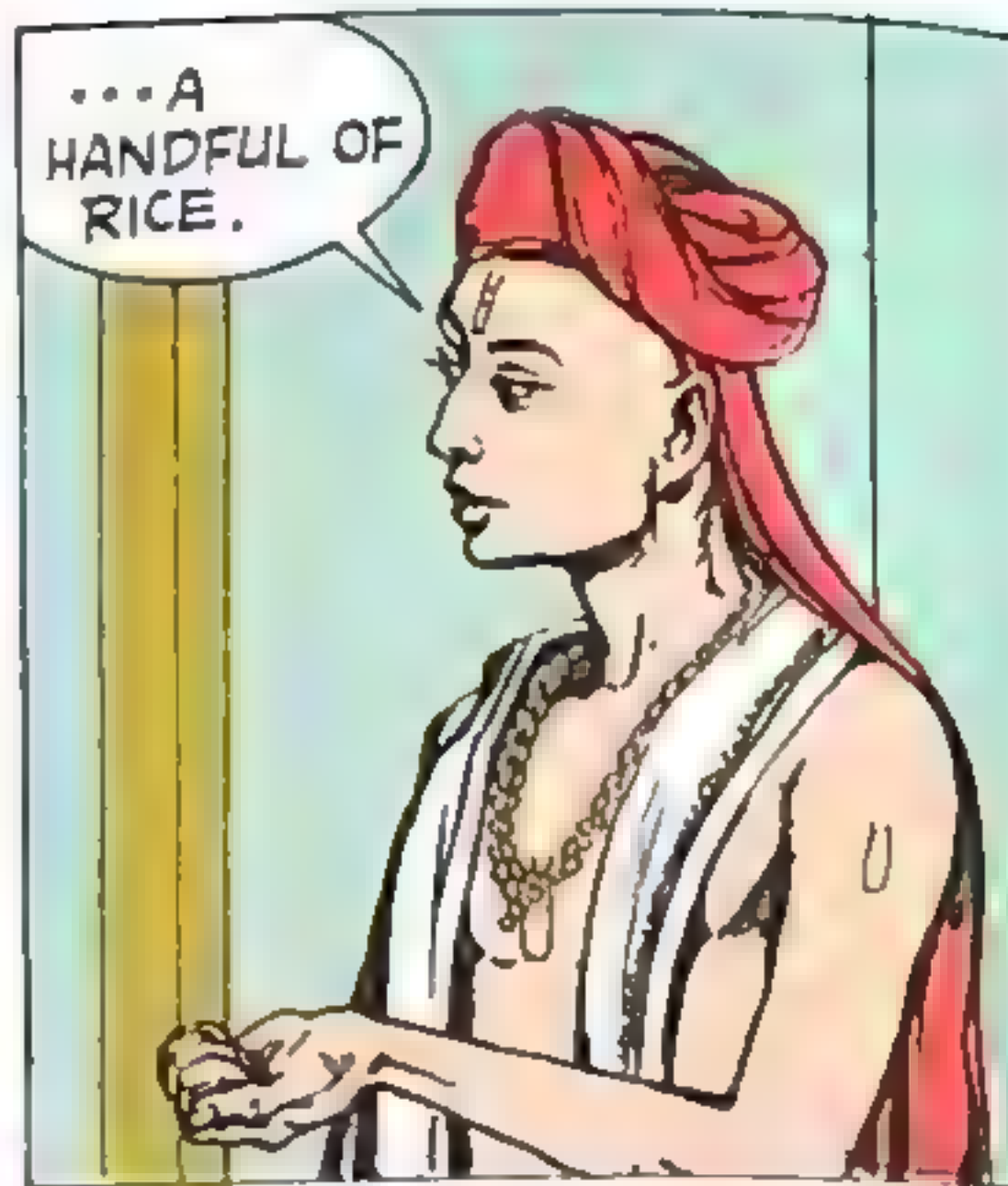
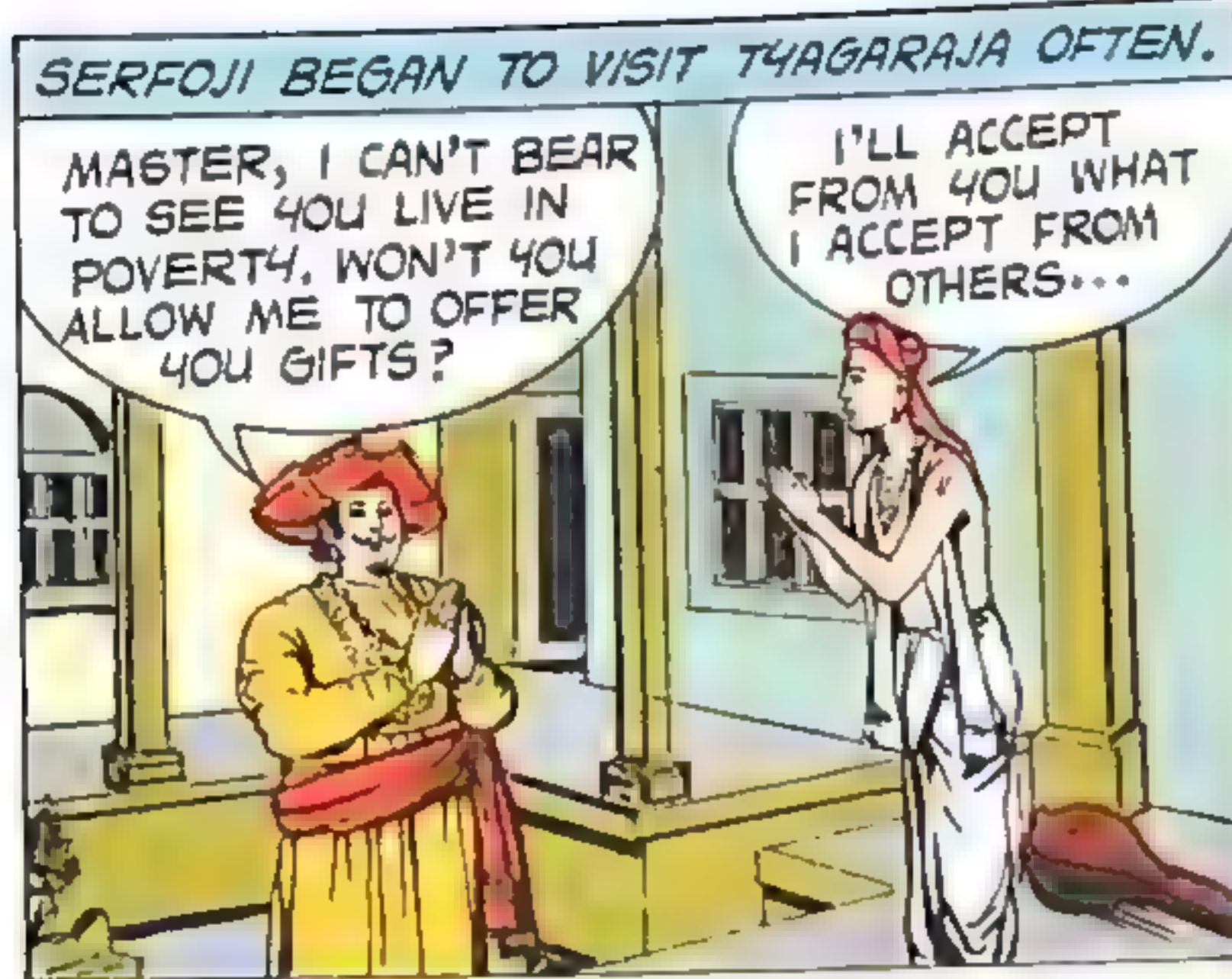


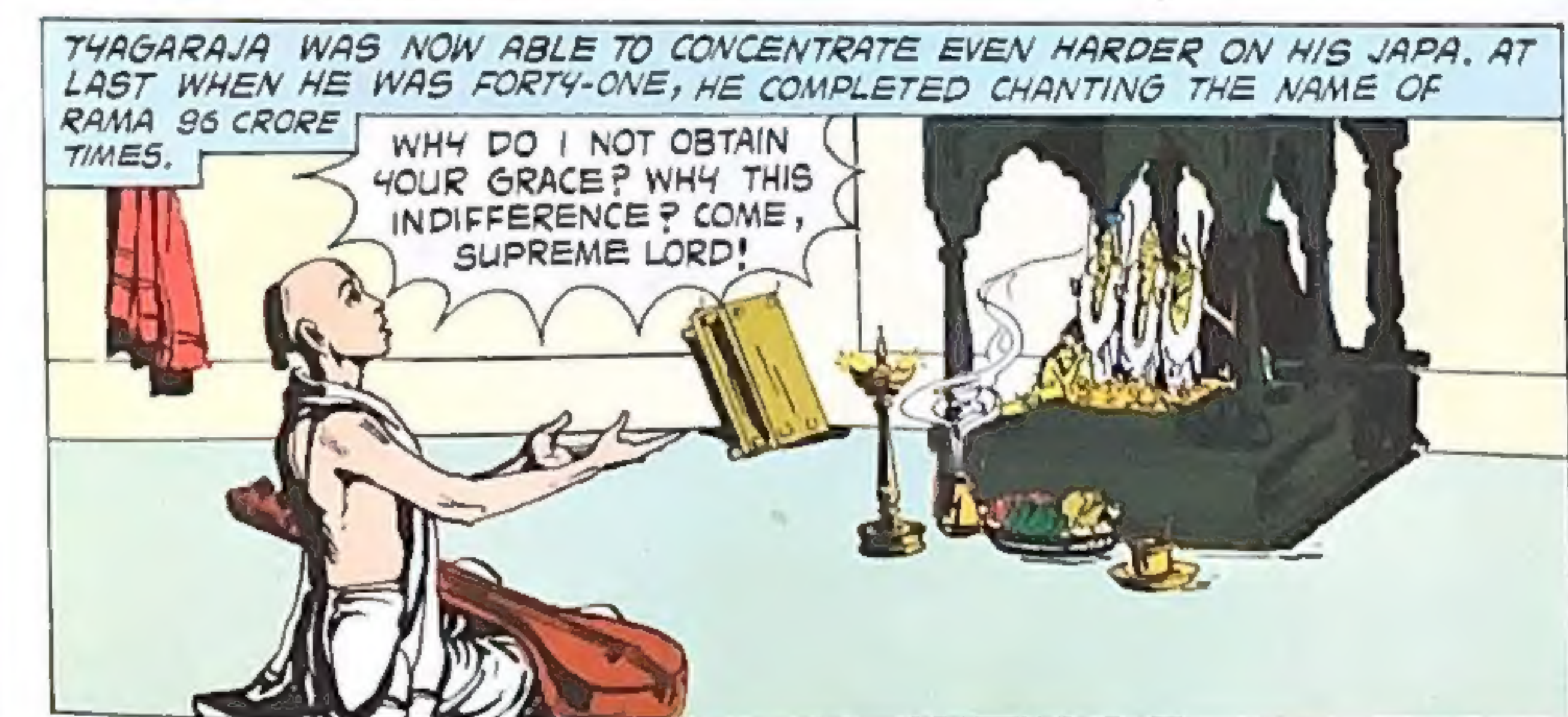
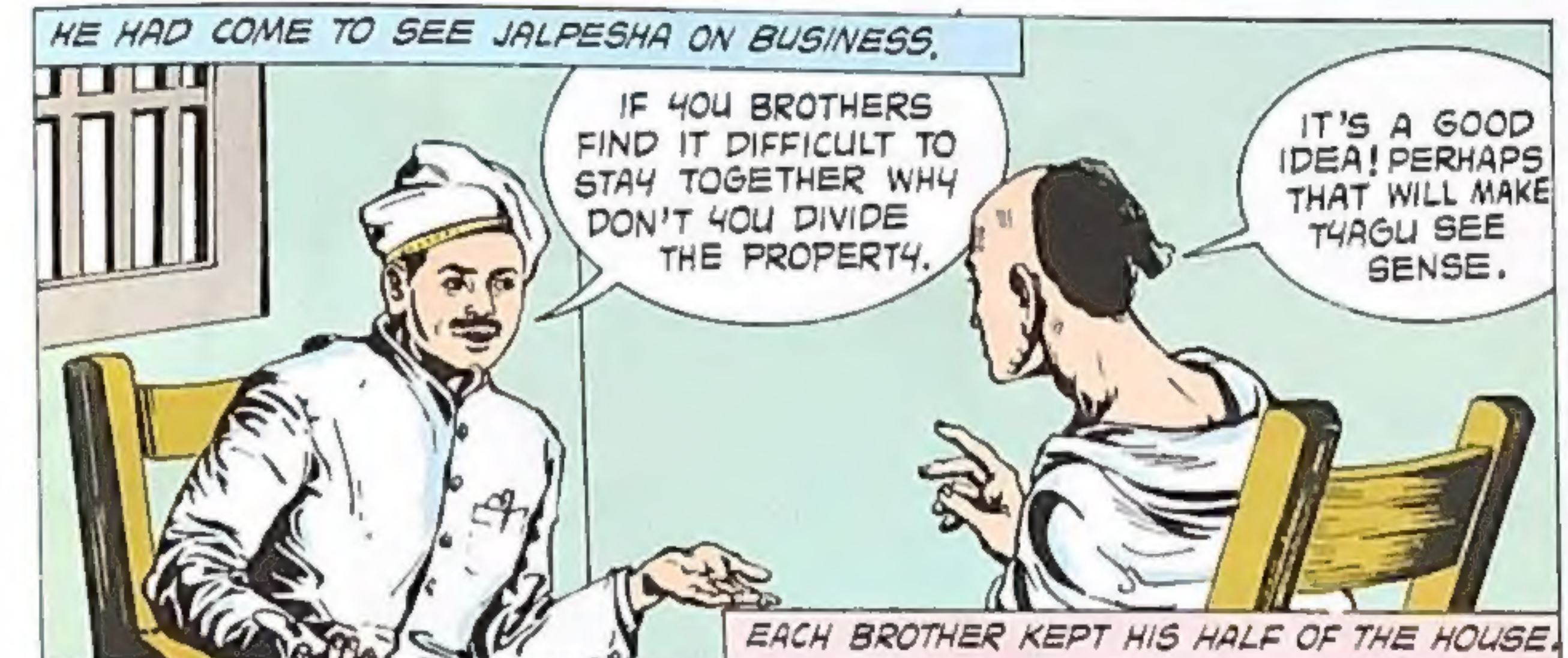
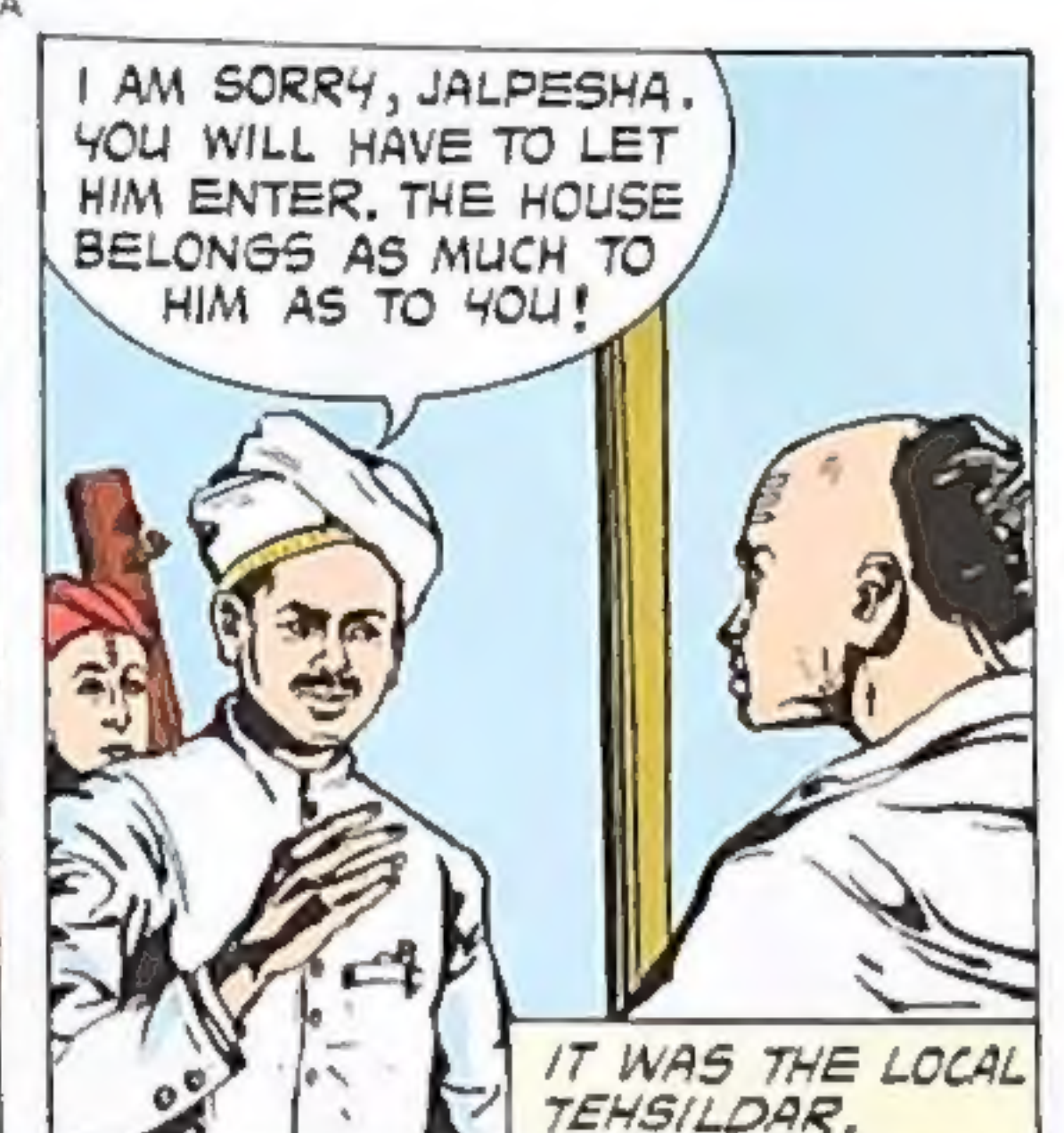
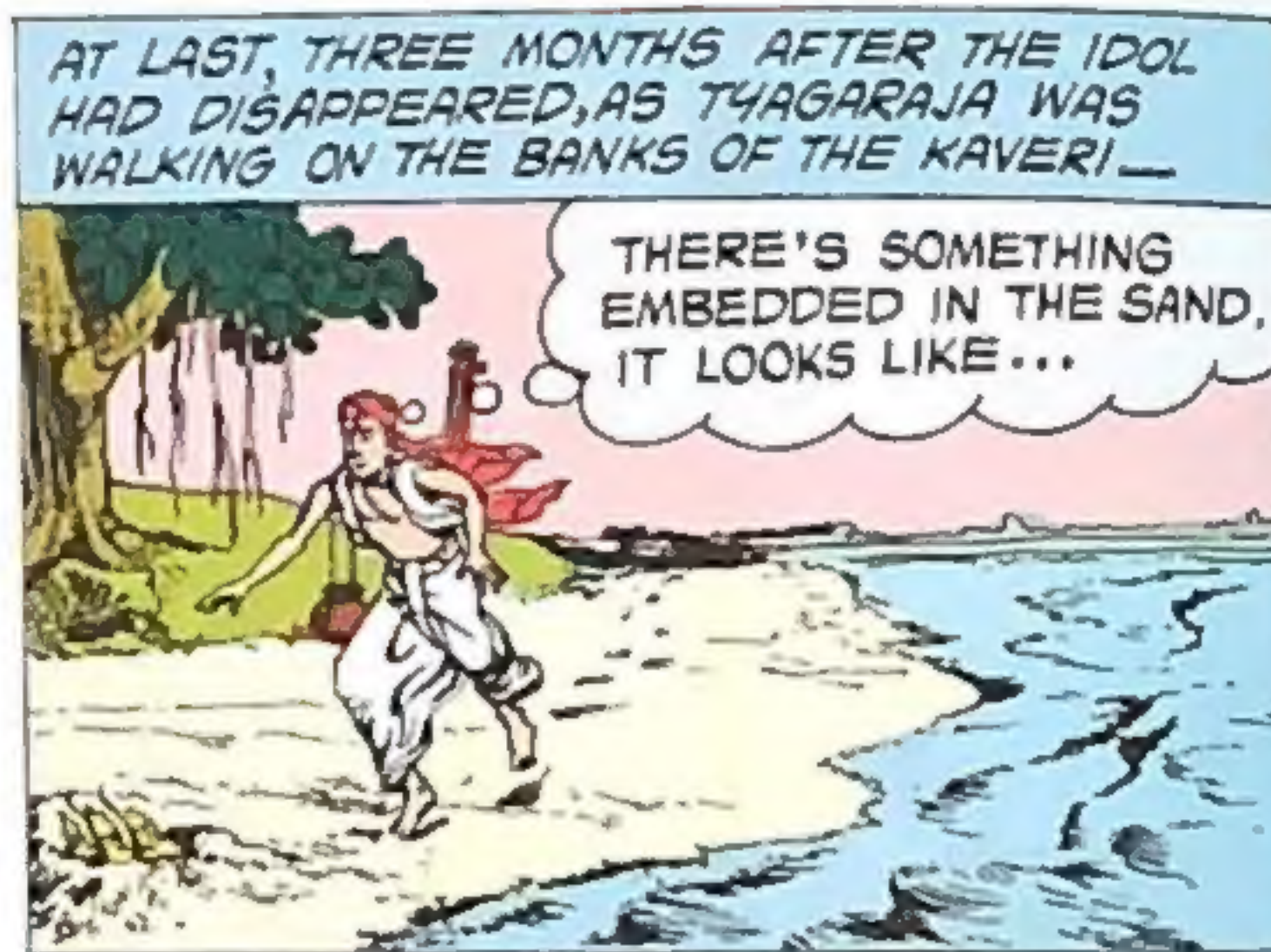
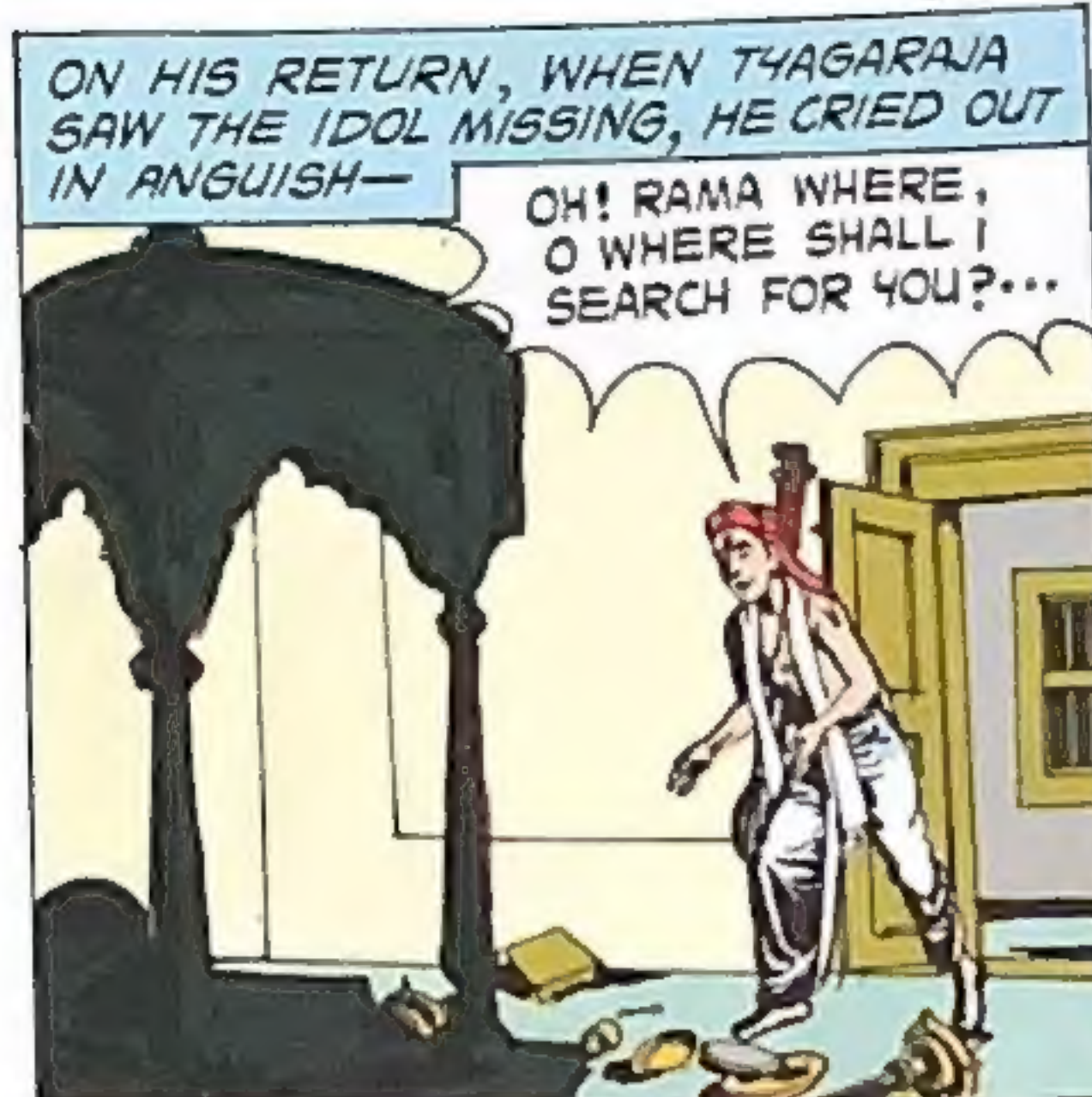
HOURS WENT BY. ONE...TWO...EIGHT! THE MUSICIANS FORGOT ALL ABOUT THE FUNCTION AT THE PALACE.

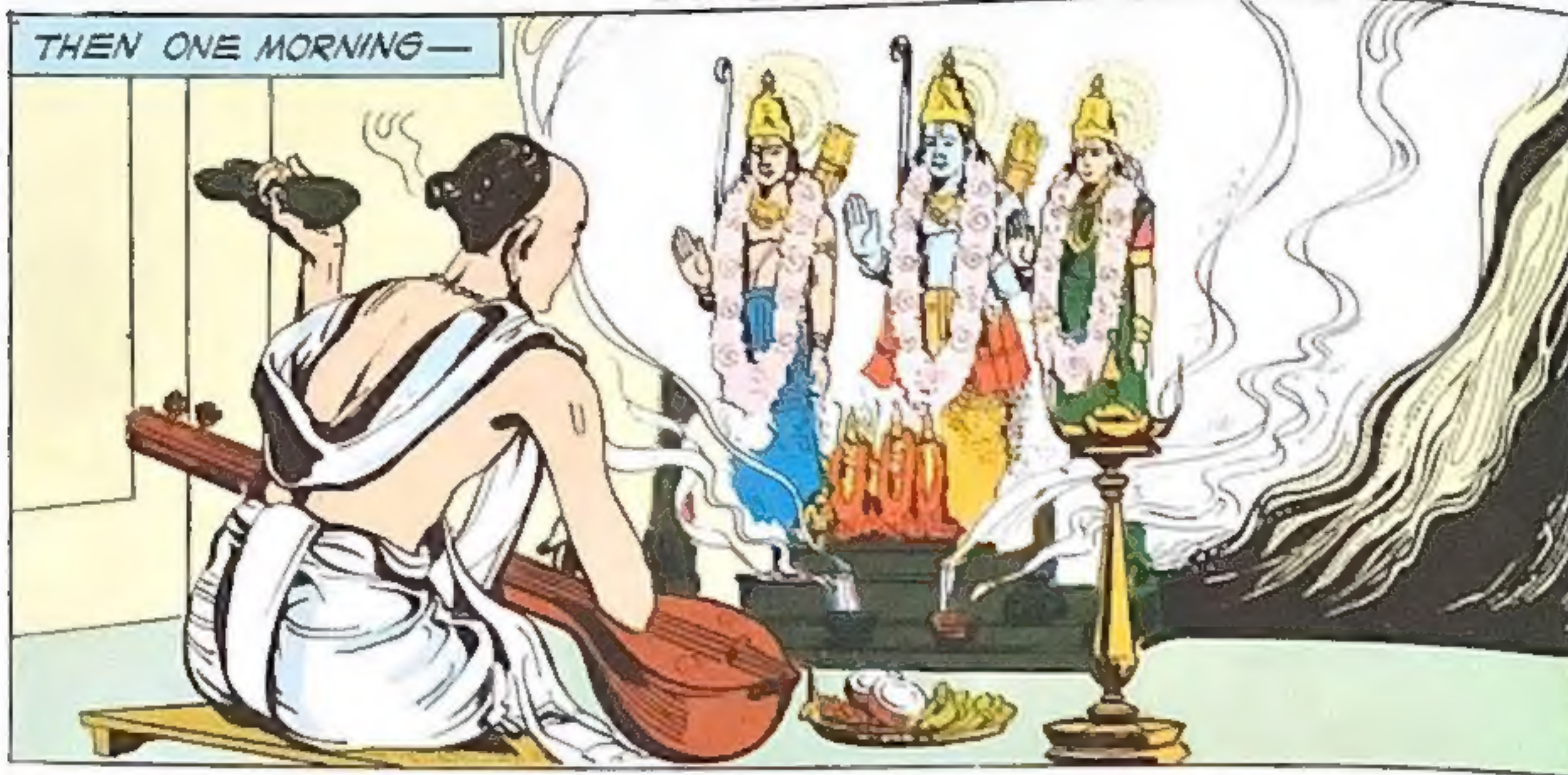




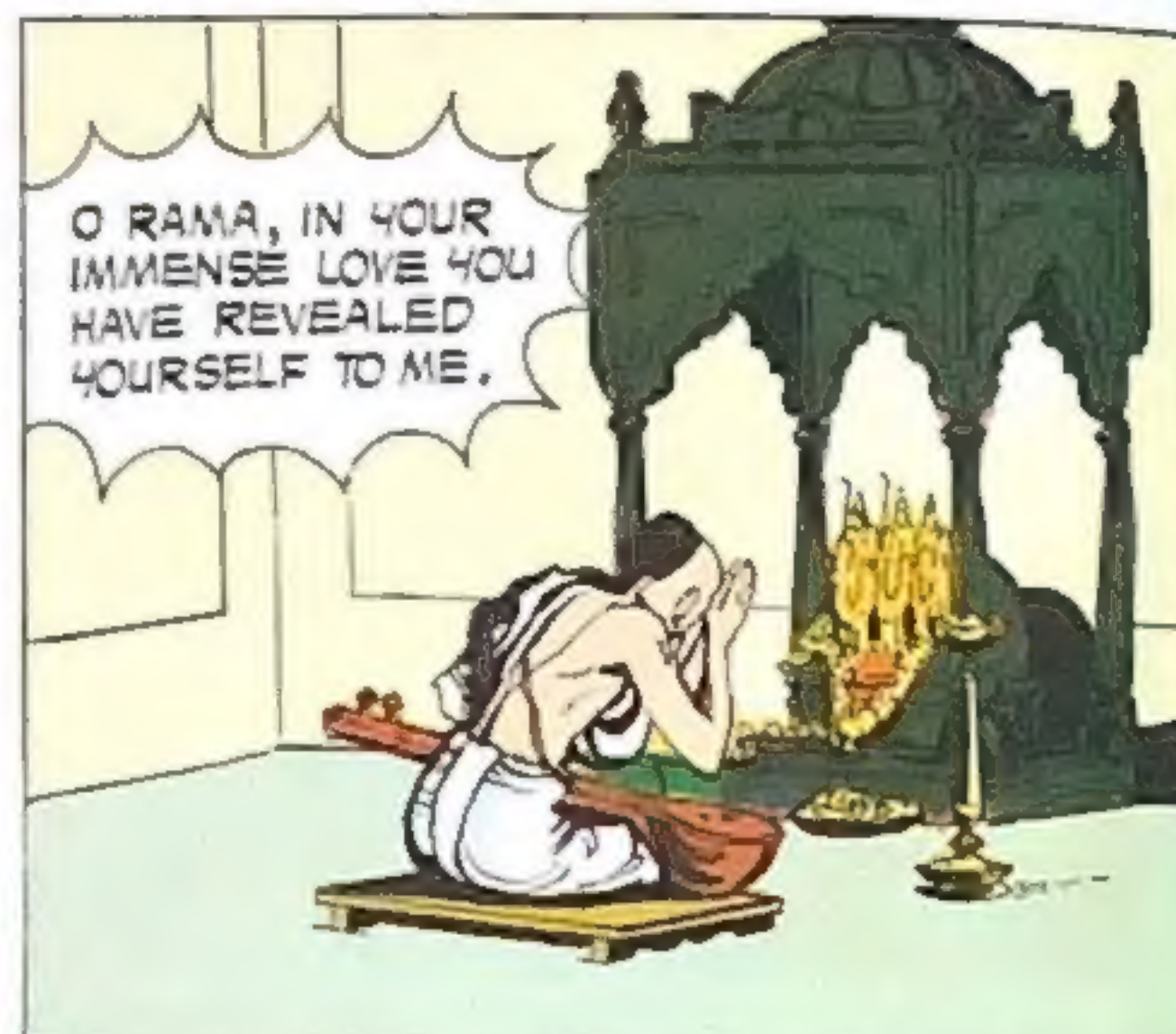








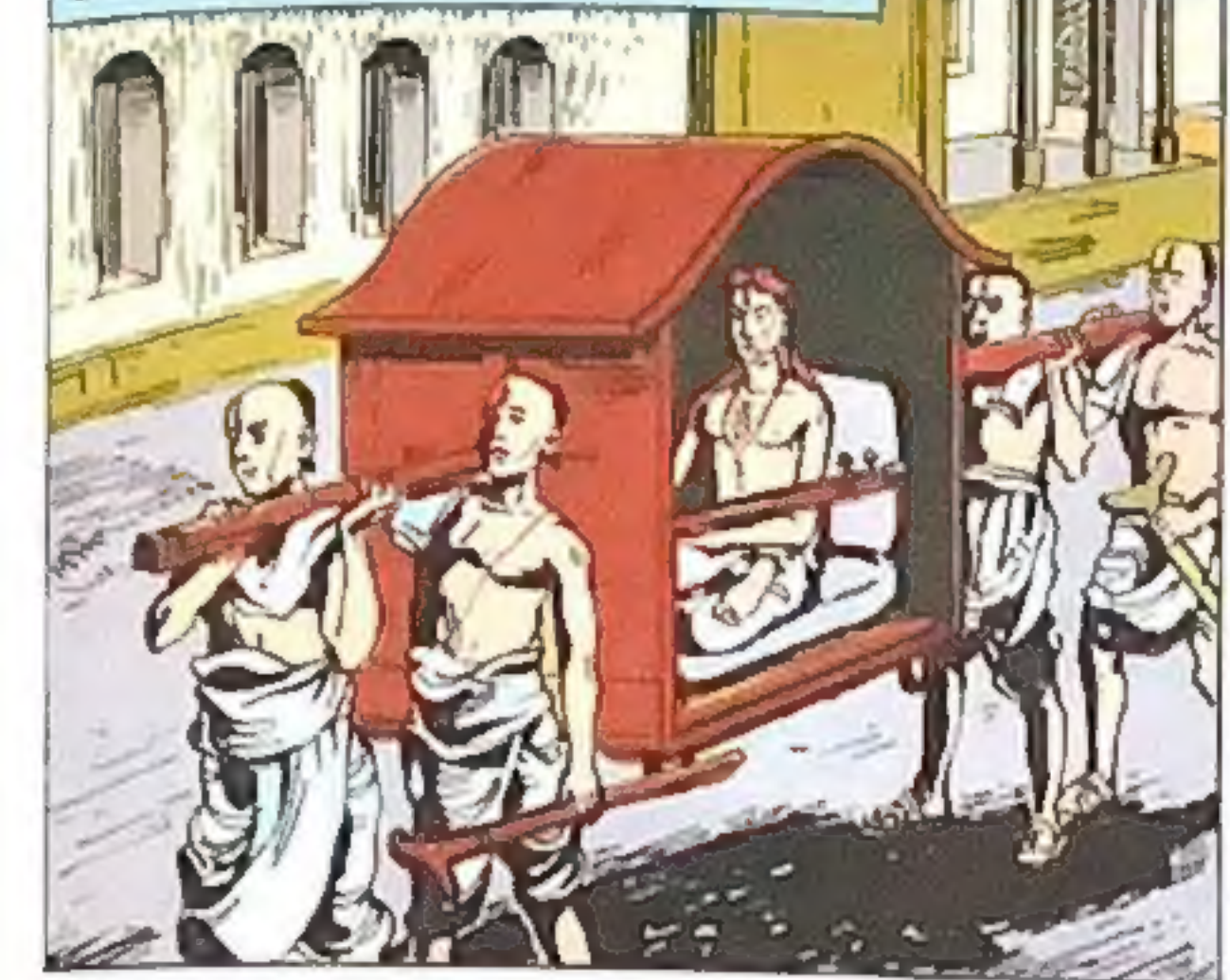
TYAGARAJA COULD NOT CONTAIN HIS ECSTASY.



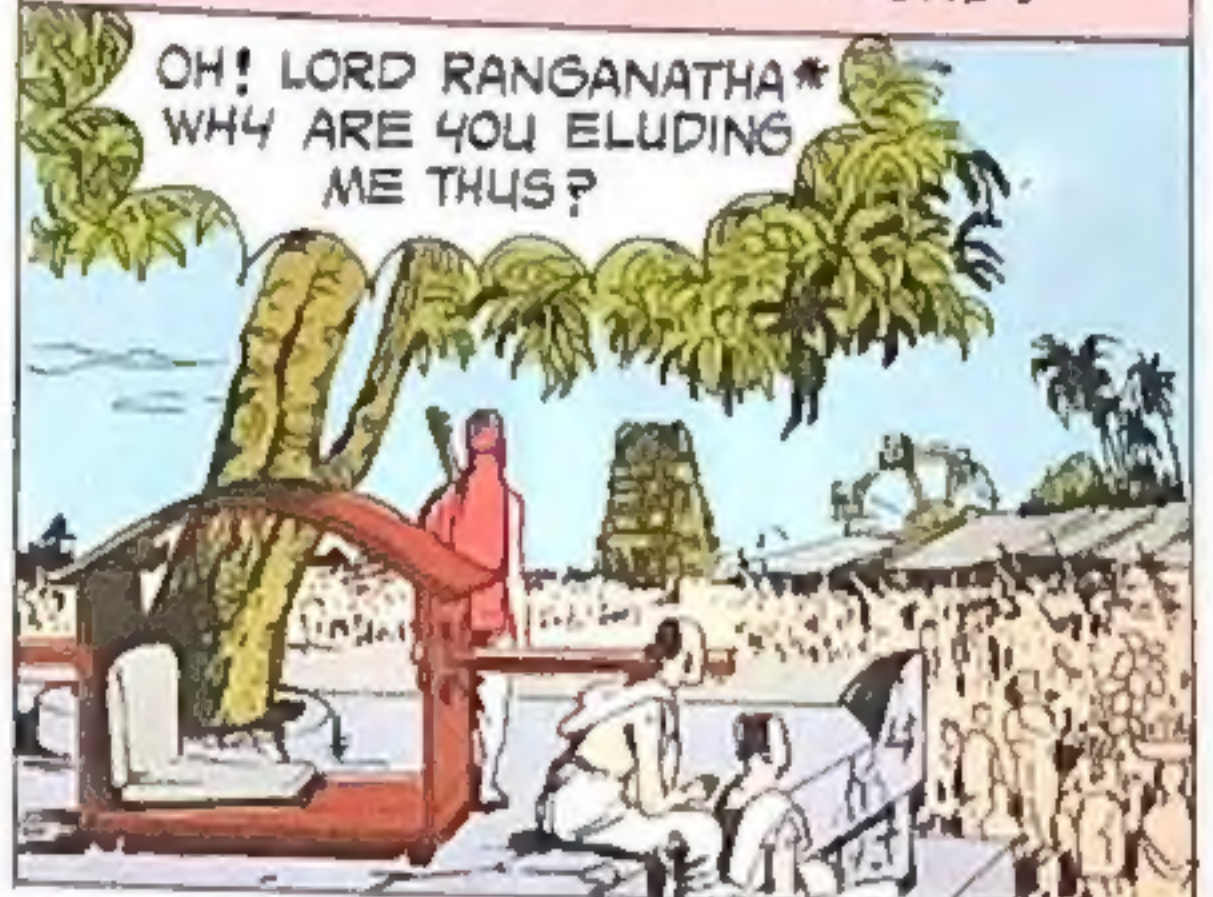
AS THE YEARS WENT BY, HIS COMPOSITIONS POURED FORTH IN THEIR HUNDREDS.



WHILE IN HIS SEVENTIES, TYAGARAJA SET OUT ON A PILGRIMAGE.



HE REACHED SRIRANGAM, THE ABODE OF LORD RANGANATHA. TYAGARAJA WAS DENIED A GLIMPSE OF THE DEITY BY THE MILLING FESTIVAL CROWD.



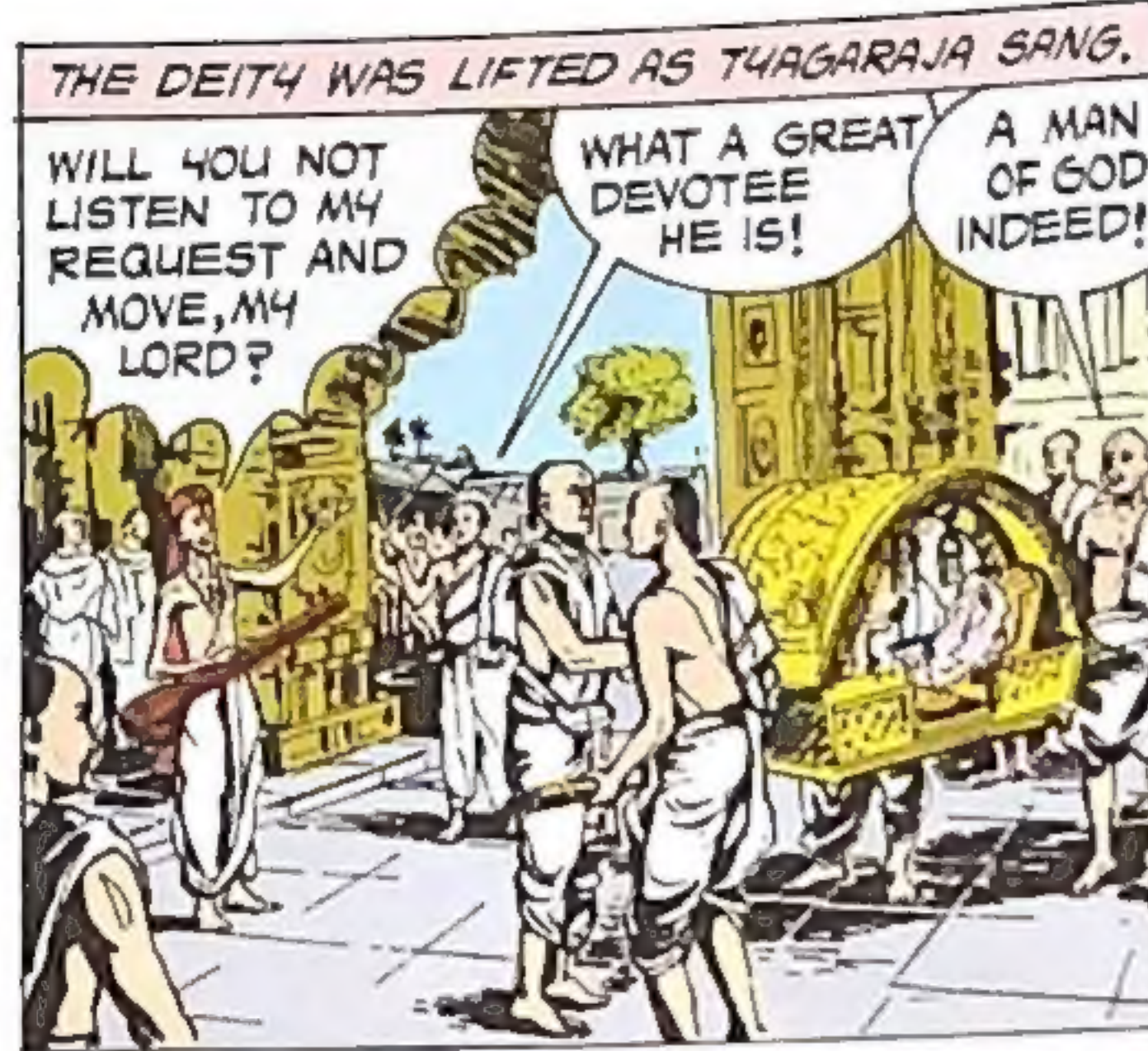
JUST THEN A BEARER OF THE SACRED PALANQUIN RUSHED TO THE CHIEF PRIEST.



AS THE CROWD MADE WAY—



* ANOTHER NAME FOR LORD VISHNU



THE DEITY WAS LIFTED AS THAGARAJA SANG.

WILL YOU NOT LISTEN TO MY REQUEST AND MOVE, MY LORD?

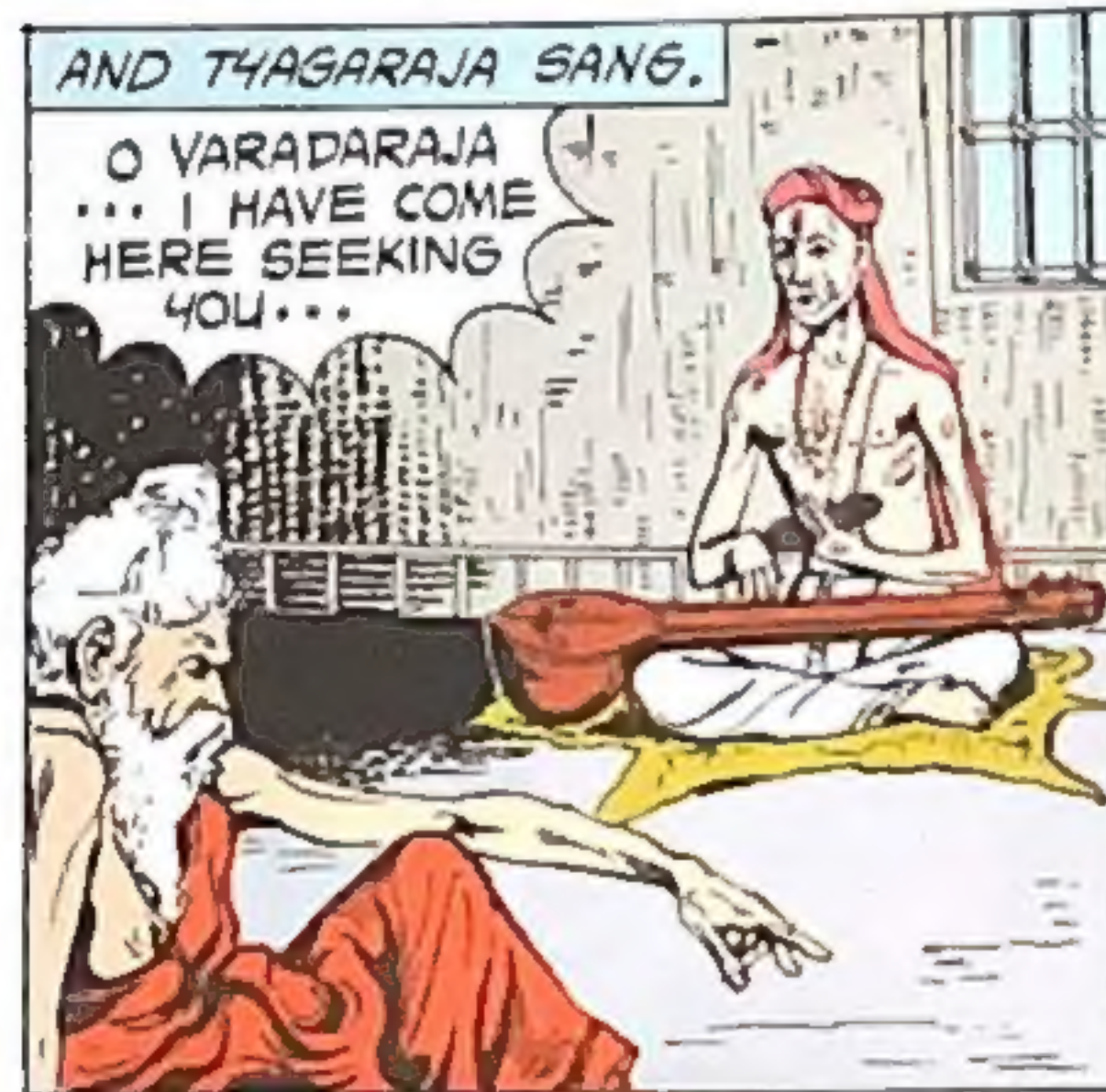
WHAT A GREAT DEVOTEE HE IS!

A MAN OF GOD INDEED!



AT KANCHI HE CALLED ON SAINT UPANISHAD BRAHMA YOGI.

WELCOME TO MY HUMBLE ABODE, THAGARAJA. I HAVE BEEN LONGING TO HEAR YOU SING ON VARADARAJA.



AND THAGARAJA SANG.

O VARADARAJA ... I HAVE COME HERE SEEKING YOU ...



THAGARAJA VISITED TIRUPATI AND LATER WENT TO KOVUR WHERE HE STAYED FOR A FEW DAYS, AS THE GUEST OF SUNDARESA MUDALIAR, AND SANG AT THE TEMPLE OF KOVUR.

SHAMBHO MAHADEVA, SHANKARA GIRIJARAMANA...



A FEW DAYS LATER AS THE PARTY WAS READY TO LEAVE KOVUR, SUNDARESA MUDALIAR SLIPPED A THOUSAND GOLD PIECES INTO THAGARAJA'S PALANQUIN.

THIS MONEY IS TO BE USED FOR THE RAMANAVAMI AND SRI JAYANTI FESTIVALS. YOU MUST NOT REFUSE IT.



A LITTLE LATER, THAGARAJA GOT INTO THE PALANQUIN...

...AND THE PARTY LEFT KOVUR.



AT NIGHT THEY HAD TO PASS THROUGH A DENSE FOREST.



SUDDENLY STONES WERE HURLED AT THEM FROM ALL SIDES.

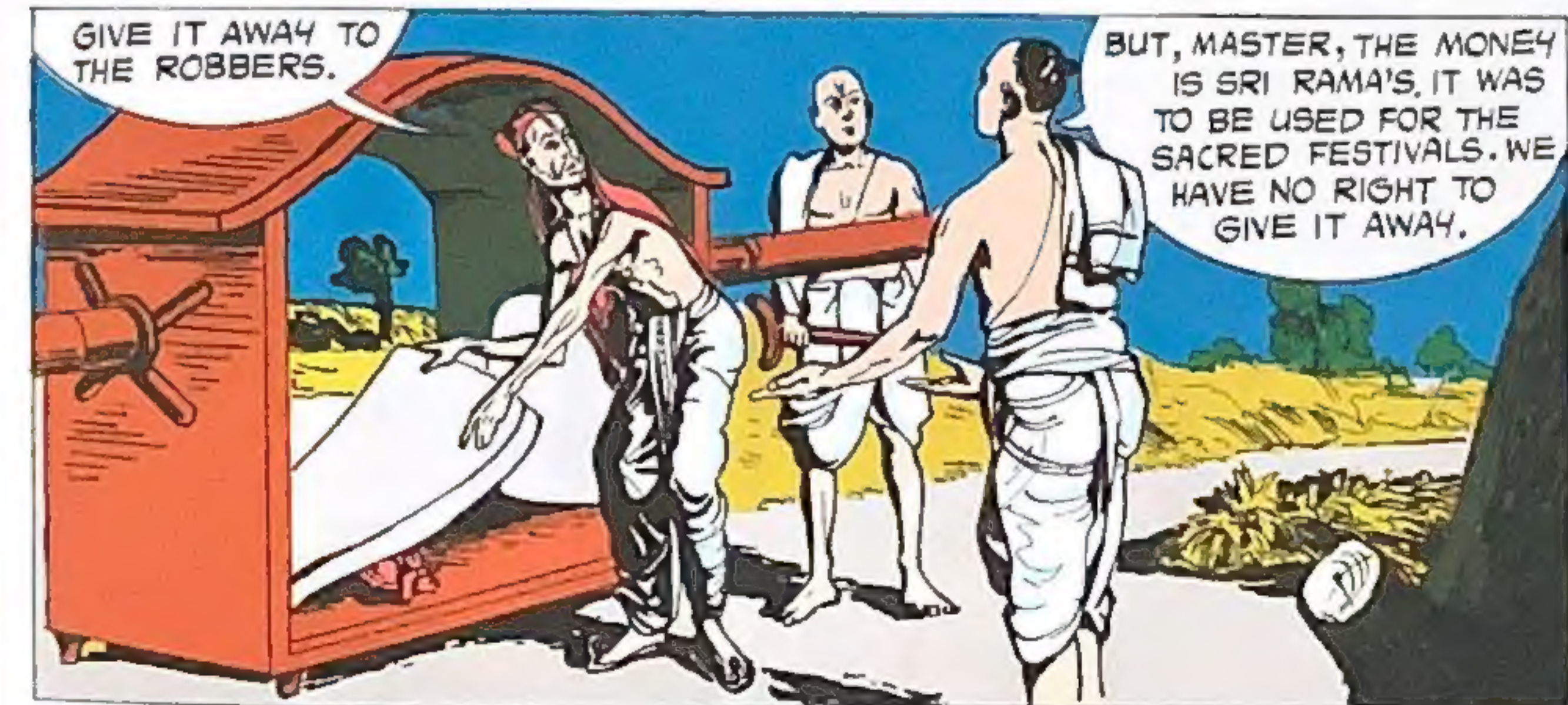
WHAT IS THIS?

ROBBERS! WE ARE BEING ATTACKED!



WE HAVE NOTHING VALUABLE WITH US. WHY SHOULD WE BE AFRAID OF ROBBERS?

INSIDE THE PALANQUIN ARE A THOUSAND PIECES OF GOLD GIVEN BY SUNDARESA MUDALIAR. WE SHOULD HAVE TOLD YOU THIS EARLIER.

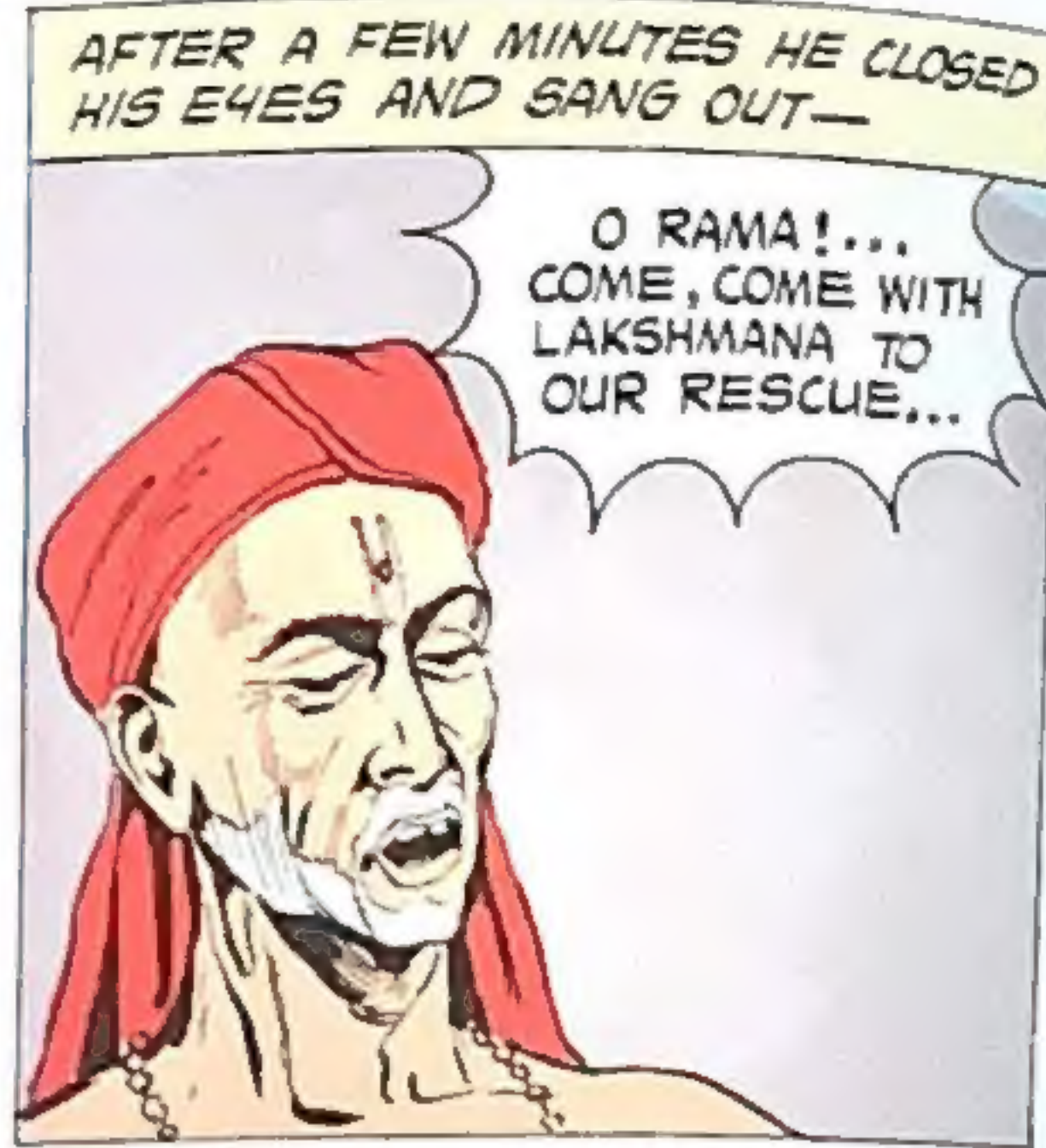


GIVE IT AWAY TO THE ROBBERS.

BUT, MASTER, THE MONEY IS SRI RAMA'S. IT WAS TO BE USED FOR THE SACRED FESTIVALS. WE HAVE NO RIGHT TO GIVE IT AWAY.

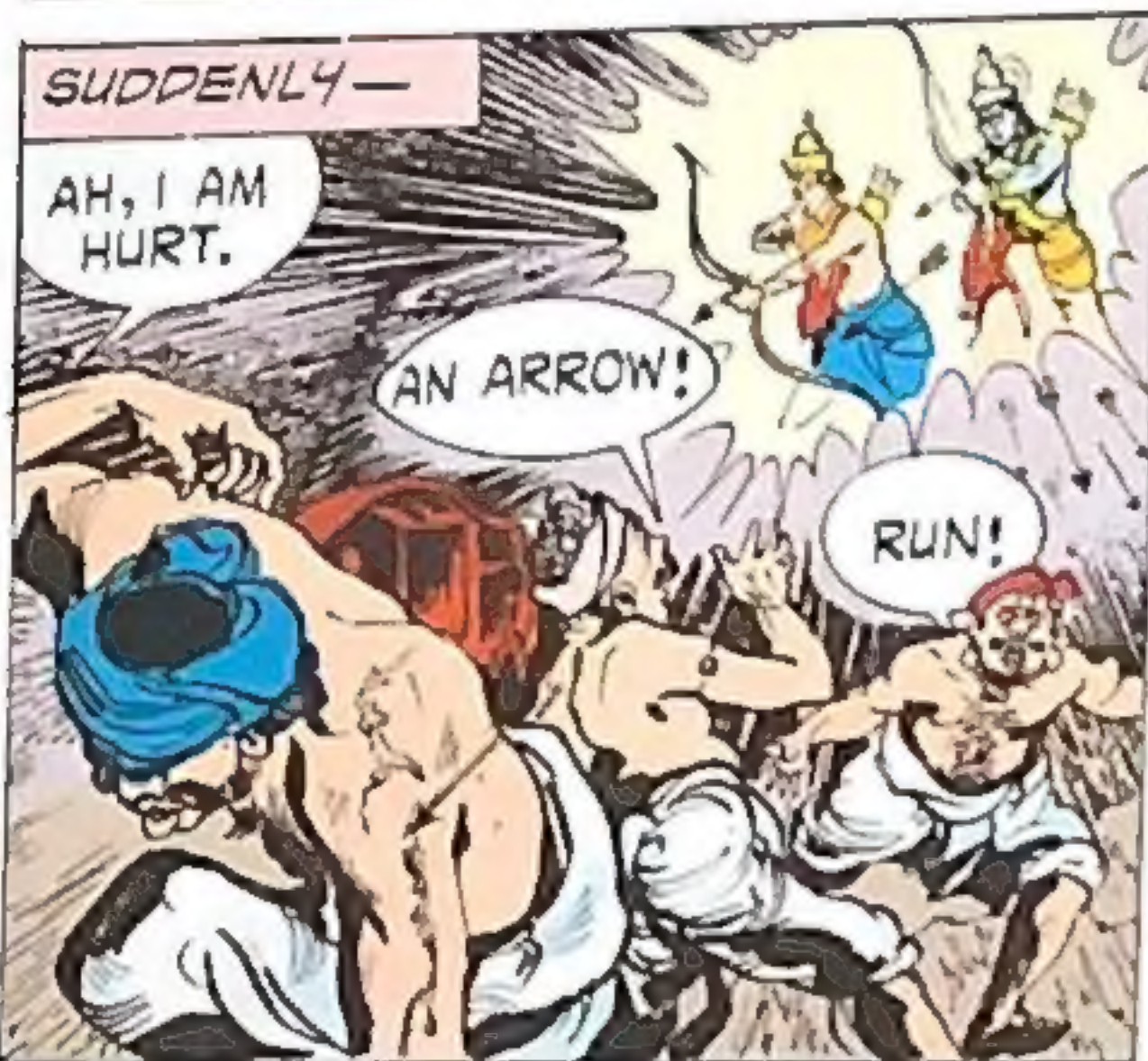


THEN RAMA SHALL TAKE CARE OF HIS MONEY.



AFTER A FEW MINUTES HE CLOSED HIS EYES AND SANG OUT—

O RAMA!...
COME, COME WITH
LAKSHMANA TO
OUR RESCUE...

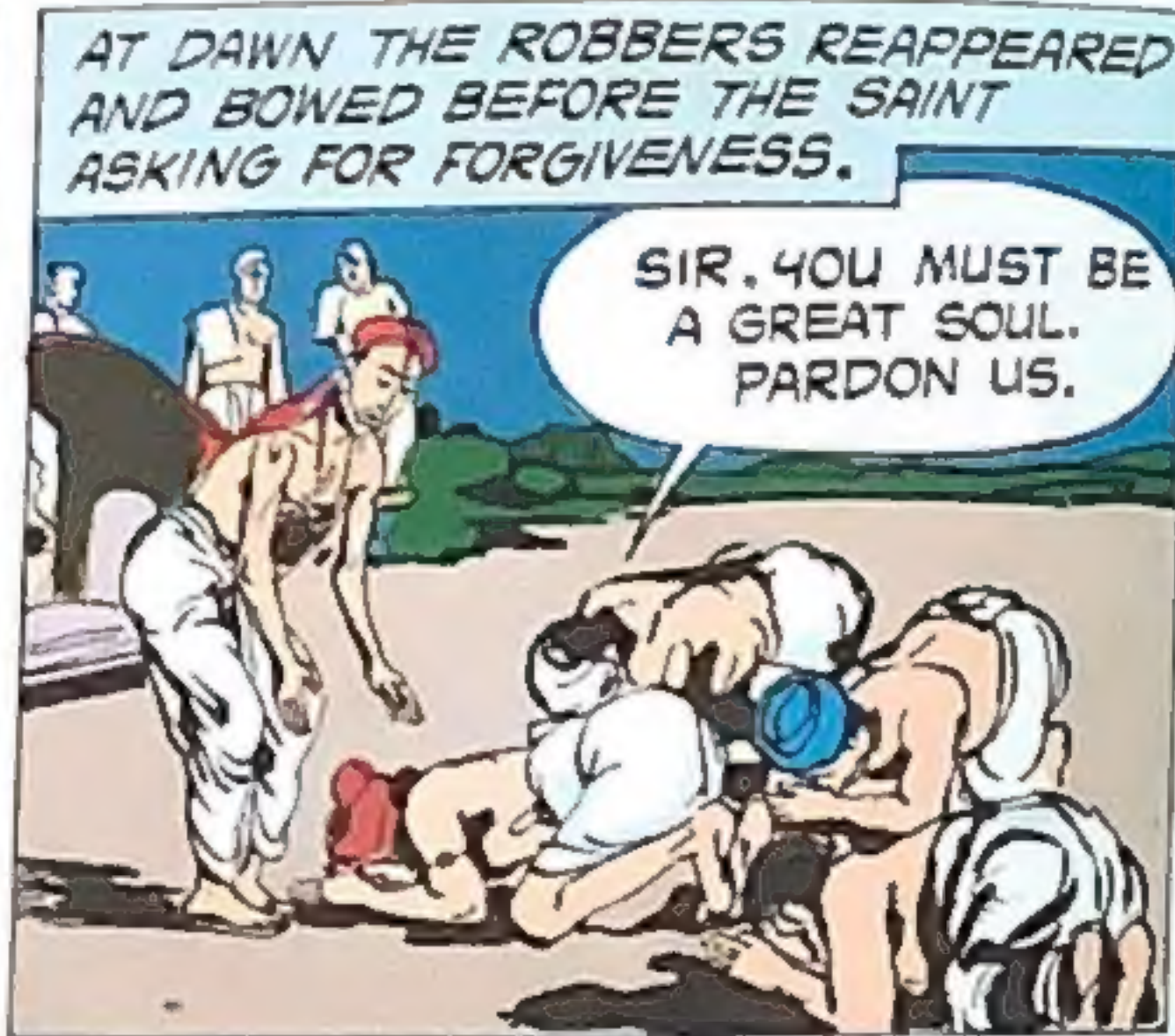


SUDDENLY—

AH, I AM
HURT.

AN ARROW!

RUN!

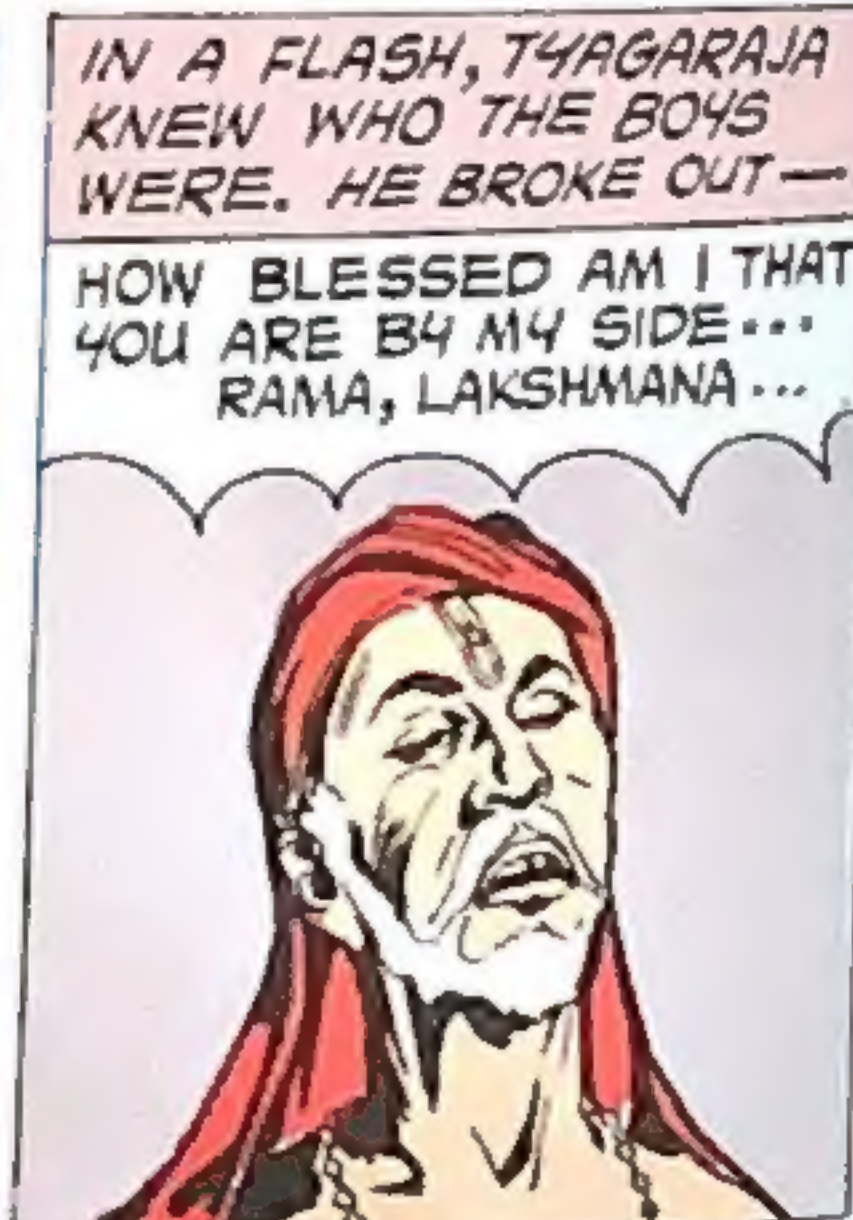


AT DAWN THE ROBBERS REAPPEARED AND BOWED BEFORE THE SAINT ASKING FOR FORGIVENESS.

SIR, YOU MUST BE
A GREAT SOUL.
PARDON US.

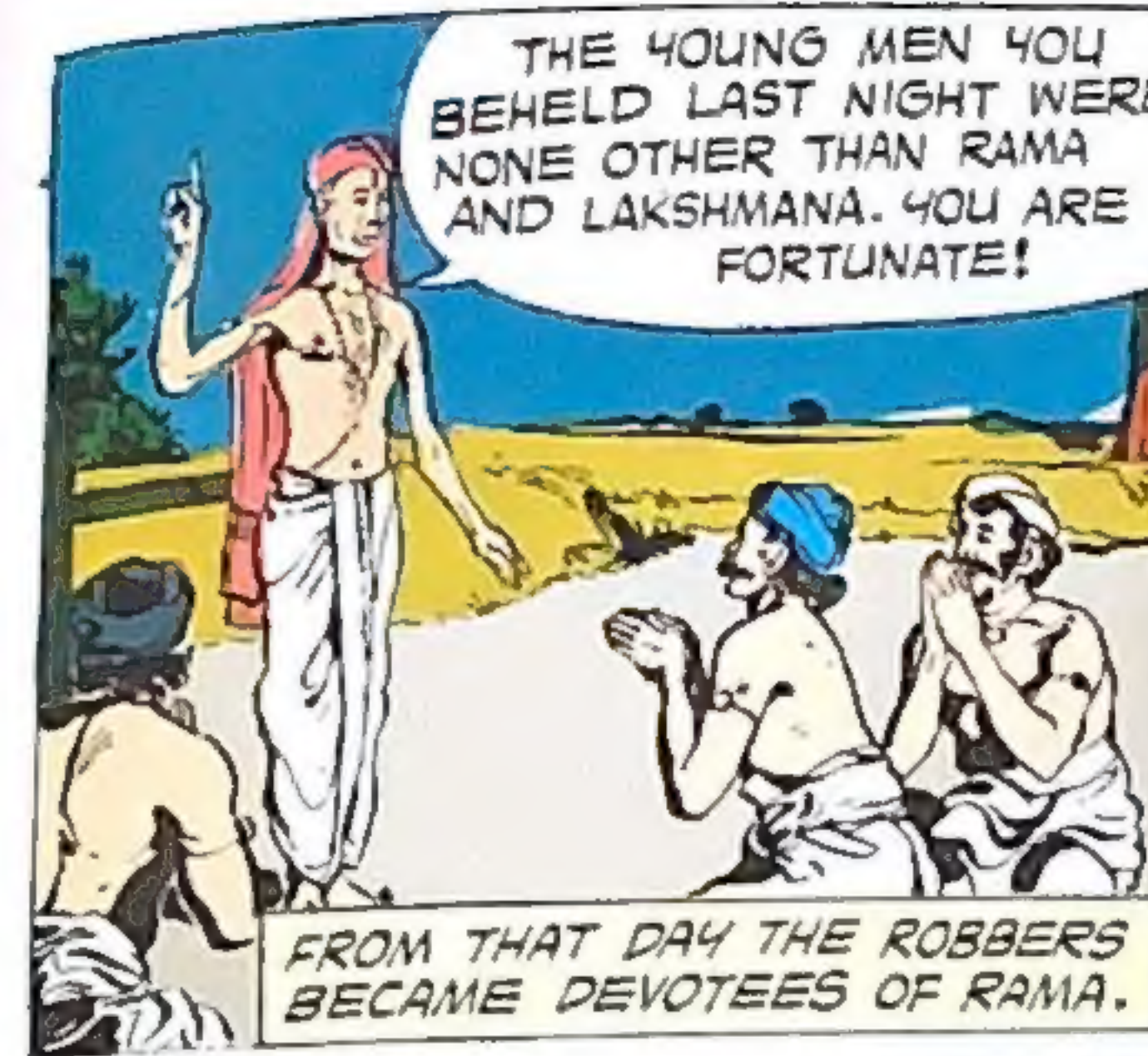


BUT TELL US, SIR, WHO WERE THE TWO STRONG BRAVE LADS WHO GUARDED YOUR PALANQUIN LAST NIGHT? WE HAD TO FLEE BEFORE THEM.



IN A FLASH, TYAGARAJA KNEW WHO THE BOYS WERE. HE BROKE OUT—

HOW BLESSED AM I THAT
YOU ARE BY MY SIDE...
RAMA, LAKSHMANA...



THE YOUNG MEN YOU BEHELD LAST NIGHT WERE NONE OTHER THAN RAMA AND LAKSHMANA. YOU ARE FORTUNATE!

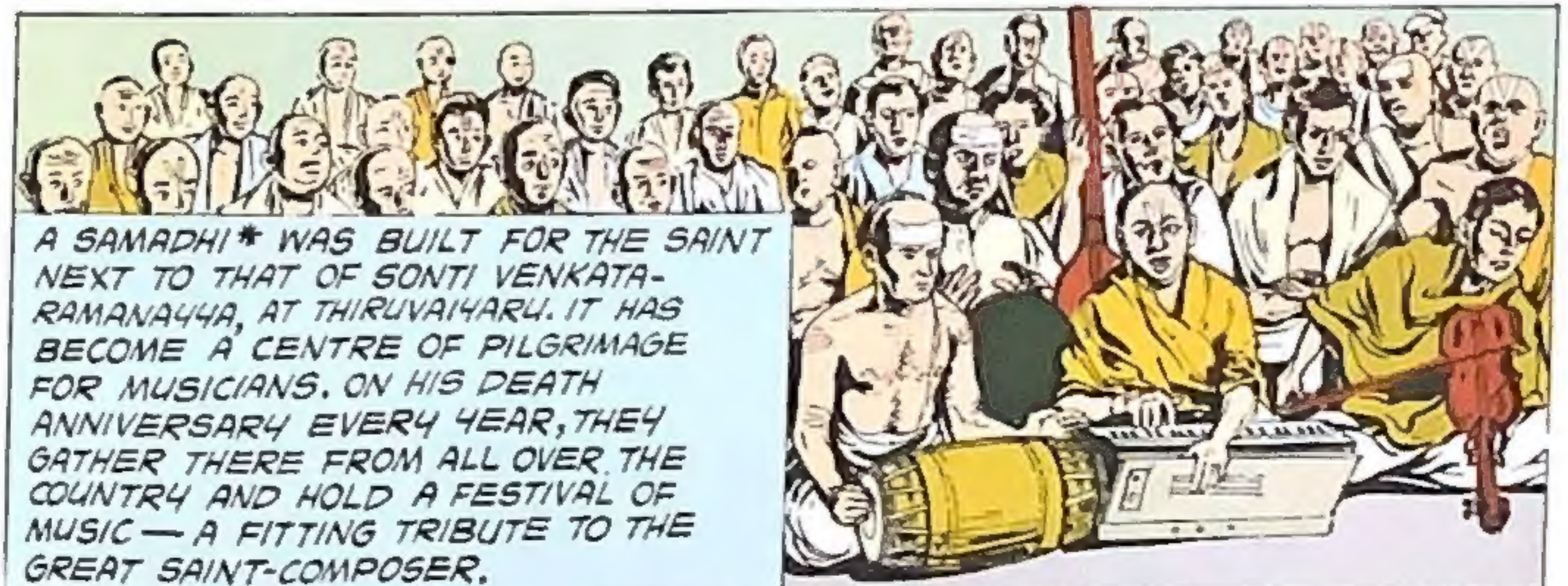
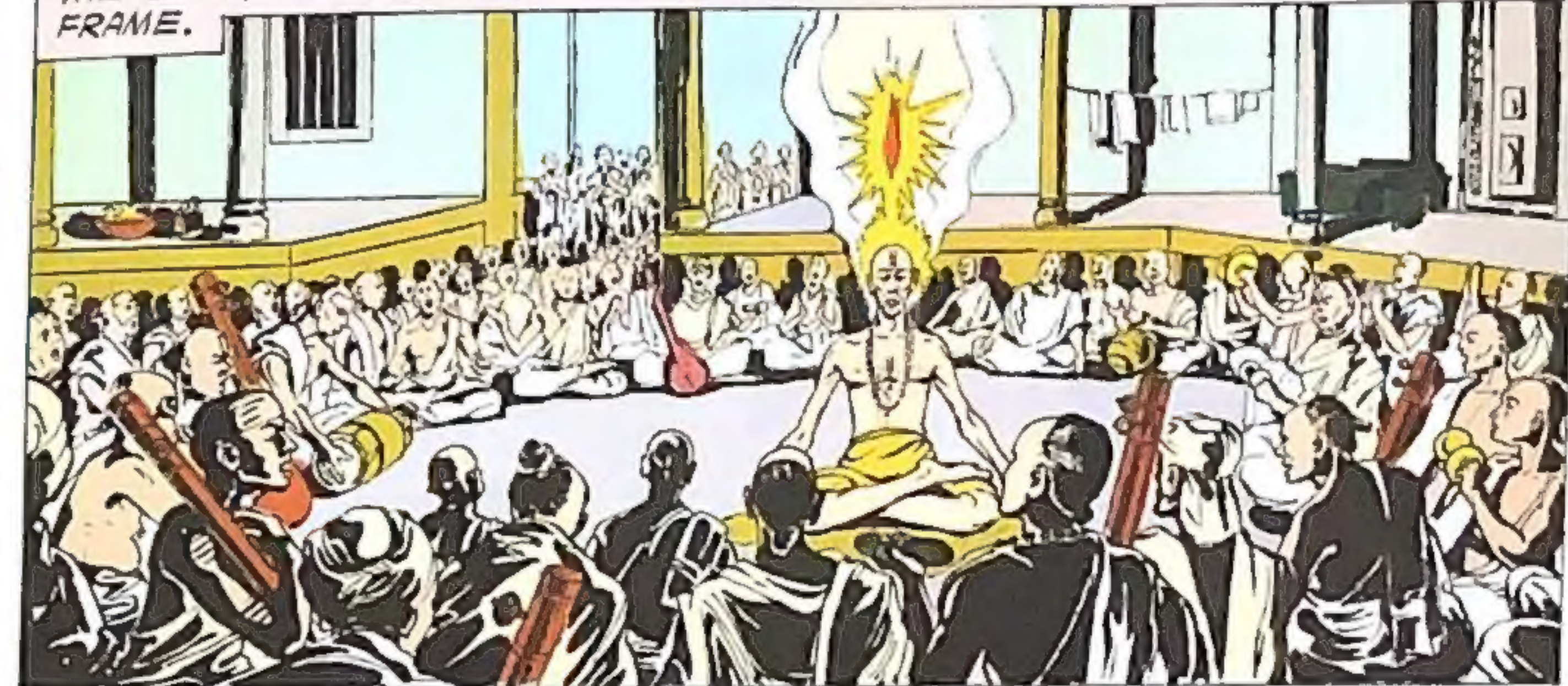
FROM THAT DAY THE ROBBERS BECAME DEVOTEES OF RAMA.



AFTER RETURNING TO THIRUVAIYARU, TYAGARAJA BECAME A SANYASI ON JANUARY 5, 1847. HE ASSUMED THE NAME OF NADA BRAHMANANDA.

TOMORROW BEFORE NOON, SRI RAMA WILL CLAIM ME. INTER MY MORTAL REMAINS NEXT TO THOSE OF MY GURU.

THE NEXT DAY, SURROUNDED BY HIS DISCIPLES, TYAGARAJA BEGAN SINGING THE GLORY OF RAMA AND AT 11:00 A.M. WAS RELEASED FROM HIS MORTAL FRAME.



A SAMADHI* WAS BUILT FOR THE SAINT NEXT TO THAT OF SONTI VENKATA-RAMANAYYA, AT THIRUVAIYARU. IT HAS BECOME A CENTRE OF PILGRIMAGE FOR MUSICIANS. ON HIS DEATH ANNIVERSARY EVERY YEAR, THEY GATHER THERE FROM ALL OVER THE COUNTRY AND HOLD A FESTIVAL OF MUSIC — A FITTING TRIBUTE TO THE GREAT SAINT-COMPOSER.

* HINDUS CREMATE THEIR DEAD, BUT THE BODIES OF SANYASIS ARE ENTOMBED. 31